

MOTIVATING THE UNMOTIVATED

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Abstract

The main purpose of this essay is to show the way students are motivated nowadays, because motivation undoubtedly represents the main factor towards accomplishing their dreams. This essay will attempt to discuss some possible components that influence students' learning. It will present the survey conducted to show the points that students find the most and the least influential in their learning. While the level of motivation they retain varies with each individual, very often the reasons they are motivated are not so different.

Key words: students, motivation, learning, influence

Glavna cilj ovog eseja je da pokaže šta motiviše savremenog učenika, jer motivacija nesumnjivo predstavlja glavni faktor ka ostvarivanju njegovih snova. Ovaj esej će razmotriti neke moguće komponente koje utiču na učenje đaka. Prikazeće sprovedenu anketu koja naglašava stvari za koje učenici smatraju da najviše ili najmanje utiču na njihovo učenje. Dok nivo motivacije koju oni poseduju varira kod svakog učenika pojedinačno, vrlo često razlozi koji ih motivišu se ne razlikuju tako puno.

Ključne reči: učenici, motivacija, učenje, uticaj

Introduction

The word *motivation* comes from a Latin word “moves, movere” which means to move. It is defined as a process that includes a desire or willingness to do something. It supplies us with the driving force to accomplish our goals.

Simply, motivation explains why people behave in a particular way. As some scientist said ‘All behavior is motivated’, and so is learning. Students are the ones that often encounter the lack of motivation which reflects their knowledge and which later has a huge influence on their future. Motivation is what drives students to achieve success in all aspects of their life, but especially in learning. Student motivation is a student’s desire to participate in the learning process. It is also defined as a student’s drive from within which guides, activates, and continues a behavior over time. It is simply a student’s willingness, need, desire, and compulsion to participate in, and be successful at the learning process. Motivation is the key to student’s successful education. Many other factors also have a huge affect in student’s will to study such as their fear of failure, whether the information is useful to them, the teacher’s approach to them, self-esteem etc.

Intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation

Every person has not only a different amount, but also a different way of being motivated. To accomplish their goals, everyone has to find the source of their motivation. Because sometimes having a desire is not enough. According to scientists, two most important types of motivations are intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

1. Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation is something that comes with us as human beings. It is something that defines us as a person. Intrinsic motivation depends on the person, whether the person is willing to study and accomplish his/her dreams. Students are intrinsically motivated for some activities and not others, and not everyone is intrinsically motivated for any particular task. If they are interested in particular subject and find its learning useful they maintain to study it frequently. Sometimes they can find themselves learning a lesson just because they enjoy the activity itself. This kind of a situation is when there exists a large amount of intrinsic incentive to motivate a student. Still, this kind of motivation is described as phenomena which can lead to high-quality learning. Intrinsic motivation is easy to lose and that is why teachers and parents have to provide extrinsic motivation in order for students to be successful in school.

2. Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation is described as external motivation which means that this kind of motivation drives person to do things for tangible rewards or pressures. Most of the time teachers and parents are the ones that create this kind of environment for students in order to learn more, but sometimes a student does the work because he/she personally believes

that it is valuable for his/her future education and is also launched by extrinsic motivation.

The whole student's family, especially parents, has a huge influence in student's education. If parents see their child as potential they force him/her to learn more one way or another. Some parents put a lot of pressure on their child by spending a lot of money on their education and later expecting them to fulfill their expectations. That is mostly the case with wealthier, high-educated families. Often, the only reason why their children are learning is because they are afraid of letting their parents down or they try to avoid making themselves feel guilty. Some parents make their children study by offering them a reward in return. This way the amount of student's extrinsic motivation can increase depending on the reward they are getting. Students find most motivating reward the ones that include money; whether that is a trip they are allowed to go on, new technological devices etc. When/if learning this way, their only aim is to get a reward in which they succeed by getting a good grade and in that way they please their parents. All of these things can make a child effective student, but not forever. Students that are used to getting rewards easily lose motivation. Some students study only because they fear parental sanctions for not doing it.

Peers, however, can have different influences on a student. Peer pressure is a process of empowerment. It can be defined as a pressure to do something or to keep you from doing something else, whether you are willing to do it or not. If a student, a teenager, has found a good group of peers, who have good grades, it is most likely for him to gain motivation in order to be as good as the rest of his friends or to fit into the group better. With a hard working group of friends, learning turns into a habit and positive extrinsic peer motivation. Sometimes this kind of extrinsic motivation between peers can turn into a competition, which will guide a student to learn more eagerly than ever. On the other hand, peers can also spread negative motivation. Children, whose friends are not interested in school and are not pressured to learn, are most likely to be bad students. Their parents and teachers usually cannot find a way to motivate them because of the influence their friends have on them. They find their peers' opinion and behavior better and more appropriate for the people their age.

Not a lot of people are aware of the fact that social networks and video games can also block students' motivation for studying. Teenagers spend approximately six hours in front of a computer. This fact shows us that teenagers are more motivated to play video games than spend time with their family and friends or to study. Social networks and video games create an addiction which can block motivation for learning or any other activity.

However, in my opinion, teachers play the most important part in student's successful education, but not just education, teachers mold the brains and personality of a child when they are not at home with their parents. They also have the biggest and most effective influence on a student if they know how to reach to him. The key to motivating a student is for teachers to use strategies to enhance extrinsic motivation with the goal to produce students who will start to motivate themselves intrinsically. The concept of motivation in education is based on the teacher's ability to inspire, challenge, and encourage students to take an active role in their learning. Students who are inspired and motivated by their teacher can accomplish great things.

Sometimes a student can be fascinated by a subject and is eager to learn more without outside influence or help. This kind of a situation is when there exists a large amount of intrinsic motivation. This is where teachers play a part through extrinsic motivation. In order to ensure students are intrinsically motivated, teachers must use certain strategies to encourage this type of learning.

Every teacher has to be aware of the fact that his/her classes are not full of smart children who are always willing to study. They have to make an atmosphere which is suitable for all students. By making their classroom an exciting environment for learning they are able to hold students' fascination and make them interested in subject. This way, teachers can take the advantage of their students' interest and turn their extrinsic motivation into intrinsic motivation.

However, for teachers it is not always easy keeping students' attention. Sometimes teachers have to use their authority to motivate students and to make them learn. When a student no longer finds his/her teacher interesting and worth listening to, extrinsic motivation easily expires and the student falls behind with the material.

All of these examples include teachers who are willing to help and motivate their students to learn. Unfortunately, students often encounter with negativity that a teacher can spread. Some teachers are the cause of students' lack of motivation. Threatening and embarrassing a child to make him/her study is never an option. It only does more harm than good. When a child does not do what is asked to do correctly, a teacher insults him/her in front of the other peers. Some teachers would scream at students and tell the entire class what the student is incapable of doing, because they think that this way the student would start studying just so that he can avoid insults he/she is forced to hear. In most of the cases, a student loses every sort of motivation towards particular subject just because of the teacher. Rarely, this kind of approach makes a student more motivated and if it does it is only because they want to prove that the teacher has been wrong about them.

These examples prove that the teacher can have both positive and negative effect on their students and that a huge part of their students' education depends on whether they are going to be able to motivate them.

General data about the survey

I have conducted a survey amongst high school students. The number of students who participated in the survey is 94 within 15 to 17 years old. I have divided them according to which sex they belong including their age. The survey has been only done to high school students because the main goal of the research is to discover the causes of motivation teenagers are being affected by and thus answer the question *What motivates teenagers?*

The survey includes 65 female and 29 male students. They were asked to put all the statements in order that will show us the examples of motivation that have the biggest and the lowest influence on their studying. Each one of the examinees' orders has been carefully analyzed and put into the survey.

Female

Exactly, 65 female students from 15-17 have been conducted by this survey. 43% (28) of the 15-year-old female students, 28% (18) of the 16-year-old female students, 29% (19) of the 17-year-old female students have participated in this survey. 48% (14) of the 15-year-old male students, 35% (10) of the 16-year-old male students and 17% (5) of the 17-year-old male students have been a part of this research.

1. The statement 'I'm learning more eagerly when the subject is easy'

15-year-old female students

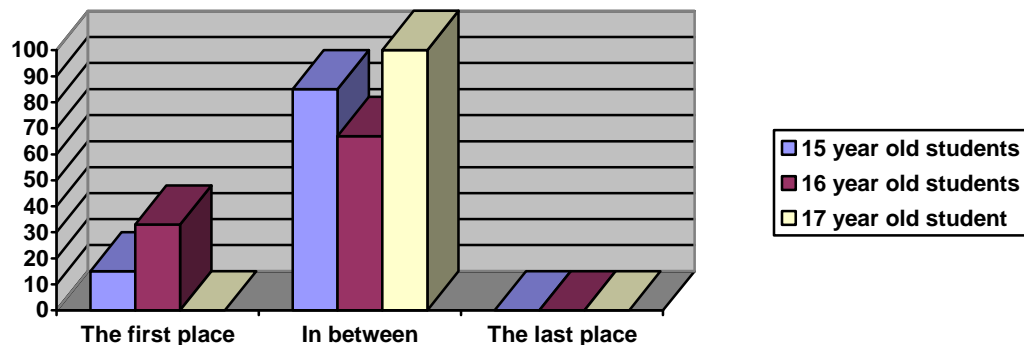
15% (4 female) of the 15-year-old teenage girls have put this example in the first place, 85% (24) of the students have put it in between the first and the last statement and none of the 15-year-old female examinees have put it in the end.

16-year-old female students

There is a similar situation with the 16-year-old female students - 33% (6) of them have put this kind of motivation on the top, 67% (12) have put it in the middle and no one has put it at the end.

17-year-old female students

100% (18) of the female students have put this statement in the middle and none of them has put it in the first or the last place.



2. The statement 'I'm learning more eagerly when I like the teacher'

15-year-old female students

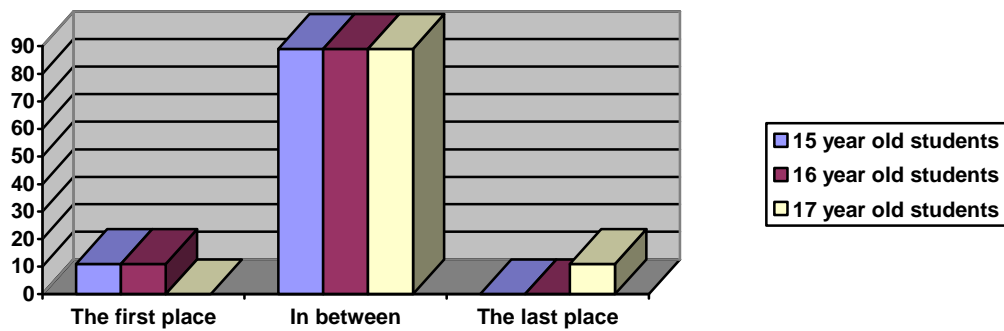
The 15-year-old female students have replied it this way: 11% (3) have put it in the first, 89% (25) between the second and last position and 0% in the last position.

16-year-old female students

11% (2) of the students have put it in the first place and 89% (16) in the middle.

17-year-old female students

11% (2) of the female students have put this statement in the end and 89% (17) have decided to put it in between.



3. The statement 'I'm learning more eagerly when I can be better than my peers.'

15-year-old female students

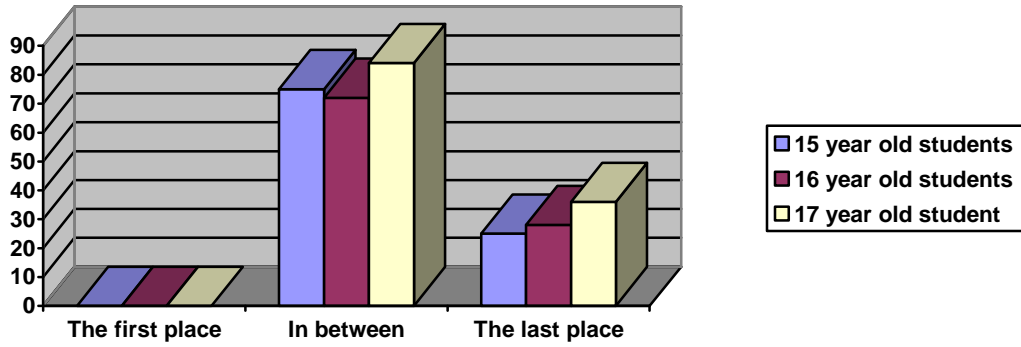
This statement the 15-year-olds have usually put between the first and the last place. 75% (21) of the students have put it in the middle and 25% (7) have written it in the last place.

16-year-old female students

28% (5) of the students have put this statement in the end and 72% (13) in the middle.

17-year-old female students

None of the students have put this statement in the first place, 84% (16) of the students have put it in between and 36% (3) of the students have written it in the last position.



4. The statement 'I'm learning more eagerly when the teacher is demanding'

15-year-old female students

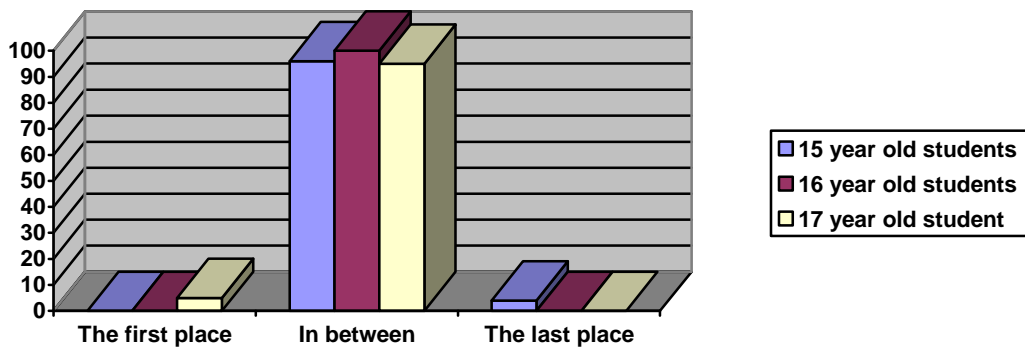
4% of the female students have put this example in the last position and 96% (27) have put it in the middle.

16- year-old female students

100% (18) of the female students have put this statement in the middle while the first and the last position have not been mentioned.

17-year-old female students

5% (1) of the female students have put this statement at the top, none of the female students have put it at the bottom and 95% (18) have put it in between.



5. The statement 'I'm learning more eagerly when I know the knowledge is useful'

15-year-old female students

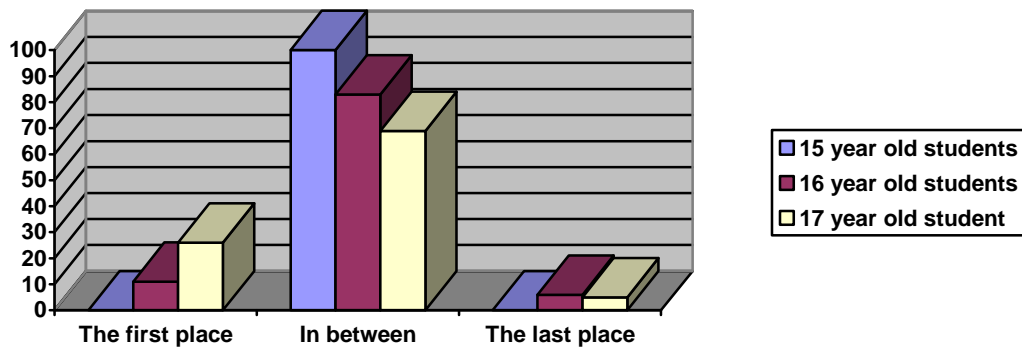
All (100%) of the 15-year-old female students have put this statement in the middle.

16-year-old female students

2 (11%) students decided to write this statement in the first place, one of them (6%) wrote it in the last place and 15 (83%) students have put it in the middle.

17-year-old female students

About 26% (4) of the teenagers have put this statement in the first place, one person (5%) has put it in the last place and 69% (13) have put this statement between the first and last statement.



6. The statement *'I'm learning more eagerly when I'm learning for my parents.'*

15-year-old female students

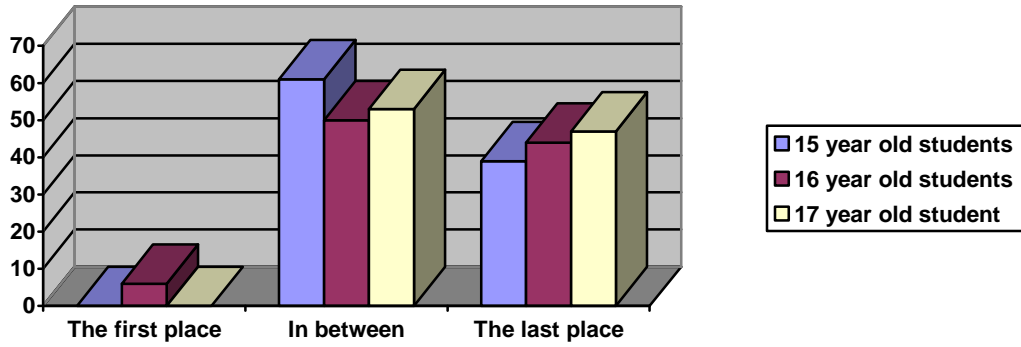
None of students has put this statement in the first place, 61% (17) of the students have put it in the middle and 39% (11) of the students have put it in the last position.

16-year-old female students

6% (1) of the students have decided to put this example in the first place, 44% (8) of the students have put it in the end and 50% (9) of students have put it in between.

17-year-old female students

47% (9) of the examinees have put this example in the end and 53% (10) of the examinees have put it in between the first and the last position.



7. The statement 'I'm learning more eagerly when the lessons are interesting.'

15-year-old female students

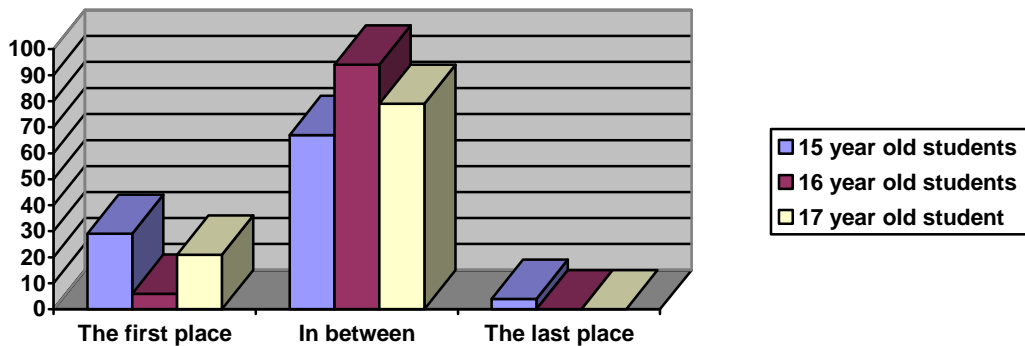
The first position has been marked by 29% (8) of the students and the last position has been marked by 4% (1) of the students with this statement, while the places *between* the first and the last positions have been marked with this statement by 67% (19) of the examinees.

16-year-old female students

6% (1) of the students have put this statement in the first place and 94% (17) of the students have put it in between.

17-year-old female students

21% (4) of the female students have put this statement at the top and 79% (15) of the students have put it in between.



8. The statement 'I'm learning more eagerly when I'm not falling behind with the material.'

15-year-old female students

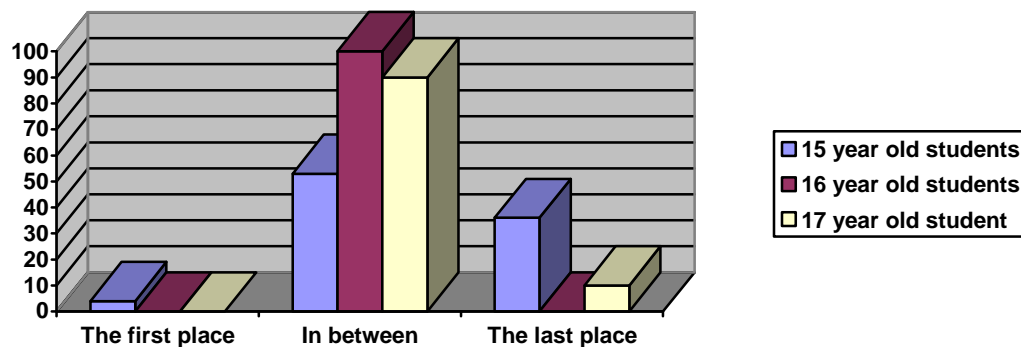
Only one (4%) of the students has put this statement in the first place, 36% (10) of the students have put it in the last position and 15 (53%) students have put it in between.

16-year- old female students

According to the survey every 16-year-old female student has put this statement between the first and the last position.

17-year-old female students

90% (17) of the female examinees have put this statement between the first and the last position and 10% (2) students have put it in the last place.



9. The statement 'I'm learning more eagerly if there's a reward.'

15-year-old female students

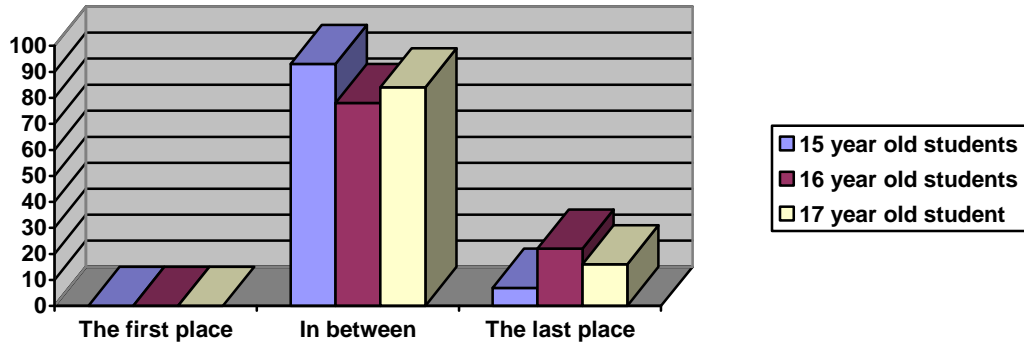
About 93% (26) of the students have put this example in the middle and only 7% (2) of the students have put it in the last place.

16-year-old female students

22% (4) of the examinees find this statement least important and that is why they have put it in the end and about 78% (14) of the students have put this statement between the first and the last statements.

17-year-old female students

Only 3 (16%) students have put this statement in the last position and 16 (84%) of the students have put it in between the first and the last statement.



Male

1. The statement *'I'm learning more eagerly when the subject is easy.'*

15-year-old male students

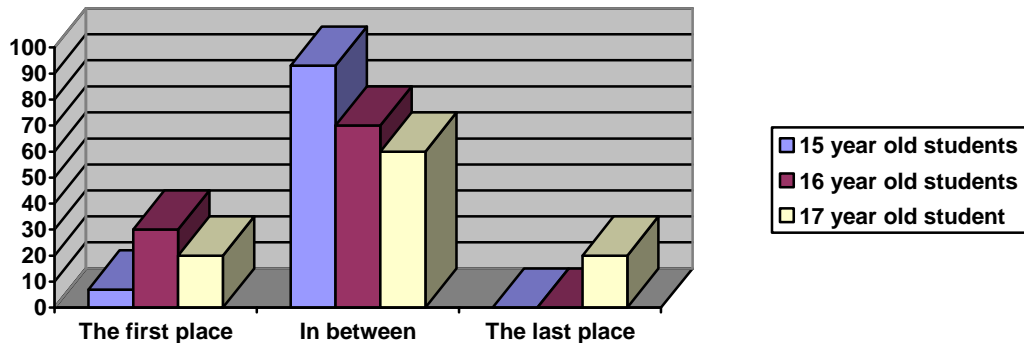
About 7% (1) of the male examinees have decided to put this statement at the top and 93% (13) of the male students have put it between the first and the last position.

16-year-old male students

30% (3) of the male students have put this statement in the first place, none of them has put it in the last place and about 70% (7) of the examinees have put it in the middle.

17-year-old male students

One (20%) has put this statement in the first and in the last place respectively, and the rest of the examinees (60%) have put it in between.



2. The statement *'I'm learning more eagerly when I like the teacher.'*

15-year-old male students

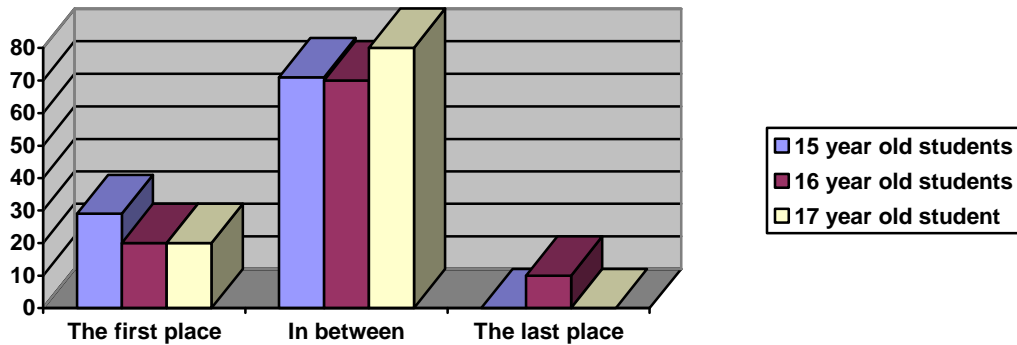
None of the 15-year-olds has marked the last place with this statement, but about 29% (4) of the students have put it in the first place and 71% (10) of the students have put it in the middle.

16-year-old male students

20% of the male students have marked the first position with this statement, 10% (1) of the students have marked the last position with this statement and the rest of the male students (70%) have put it in between.

17-year-old male students

80% (4) of the students have filled the places between the last and the first example with this statement and only 20% (1) have marked the first place with it.



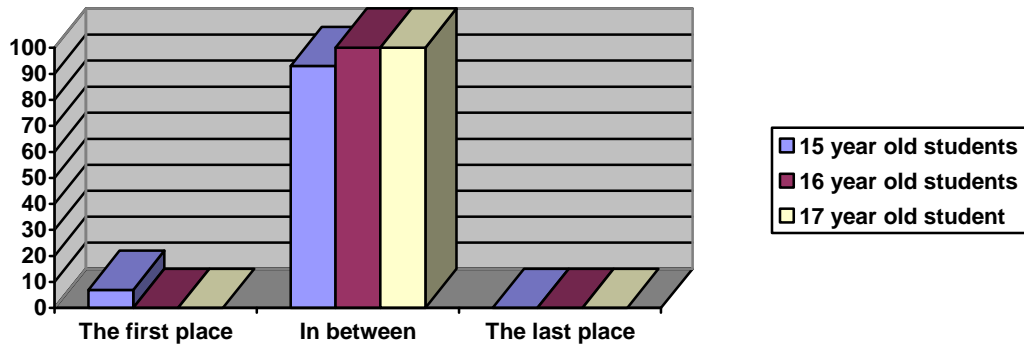
3. The statement *'I'm learning more eagerly when I can be better than my peers.'*

15-year-old male students

7% (1) of the students have put this statement in the first place and 93% (13) of the students have put it in the middle.

16 and 17-year-old male students

All of the 16 and 17 year old male students have put this statement between the first and the last example.



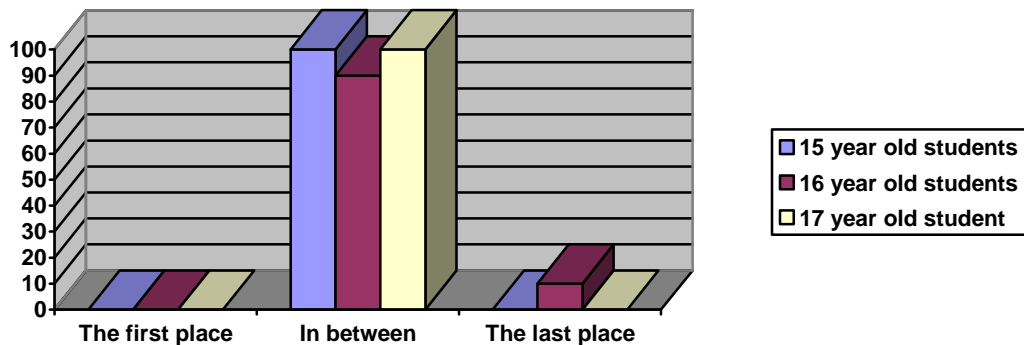
4. The statement 'I'm learning more eagerly when the teacher is demanding'

15 and 17-year-old male students

100% of both 15 and 17-year-old students have put this statement in the middle.

16-year-old male students

10% (1) of the examinees has put this statement in the last place and 90% (9) of the male examinees have put it in the middle.



5. The statement 'I'm learning more eagerly when I know the knowledge is useful'

15-year-old male students

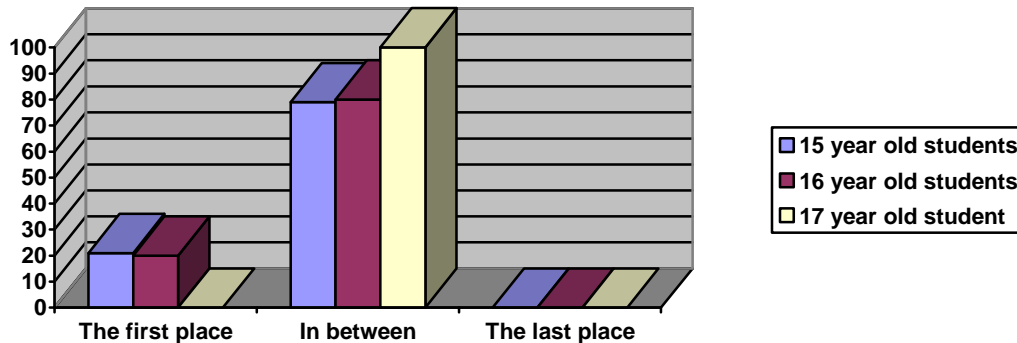
21% (3) of the male students marked the first place with this example, 79% (11) of them filled the middle with it and none of them has put it in the last place.

16-year-old male students

80% (8) of the students have decided to put this statement in the middle and 20% (2) of them have put it at the top.

17-year-old male students

All of the 17-year-old male students have put this statement in the middle.



6. The statement *'I'm learning more eagerly when I'm learning for my parents.'*

15-year-old male students

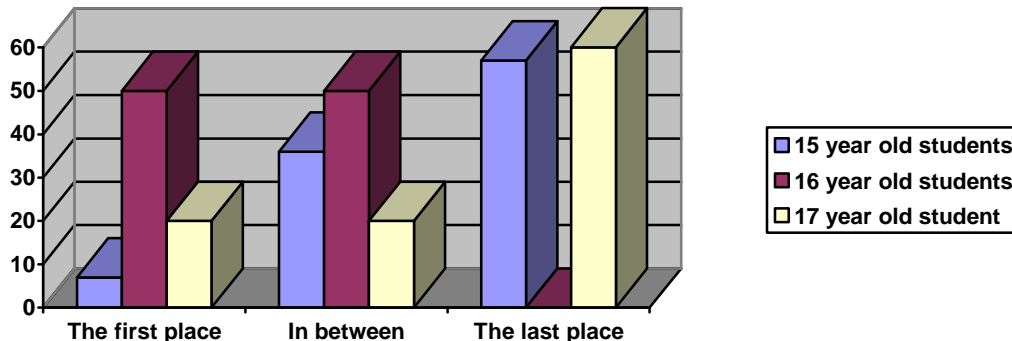
One (7%) student has put this statement in the first place, 8 (57%) students have put it in the last place and 5 (36%) male students have put it in between these two positions.

16-year-old male students

Half of the students (50%) have put this statement in the first place and the other half has put it in the middle.

17-year-old male students

The first position and the middle have been marked with this example by 20% (1) of the students and the last position has been marked by 60% (3) of the students.



7. The statement *'I'm learning more eagerly when the lessons are interesting.'*

15-year-old male students

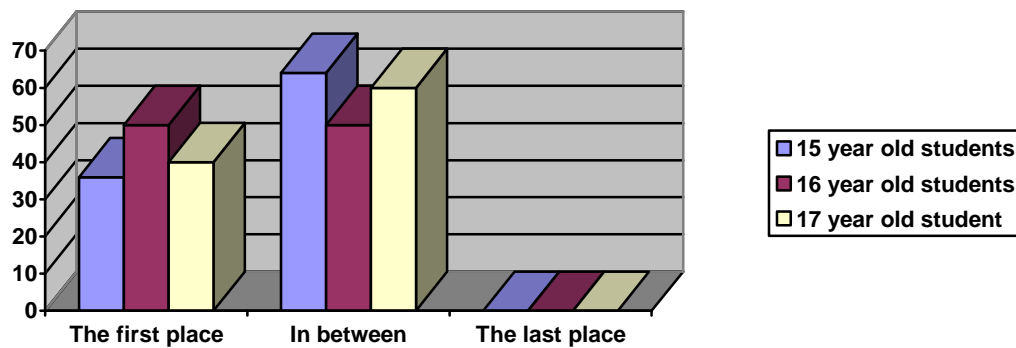
36% (5) of the students have put this statement in the first place while 64% of the students have put it in the positions between the first and the last.

16-year-old male students

50% (5) of the students have put this statement in the first place and in the middle respectively.

17-year-old male students

2 (40%) students have put this statement at the top and 3 (60%) students have put it in the middle.



8. The statement 'I'm learning more eagerly when I'm not falling behind with the material.'

15-year-old male students

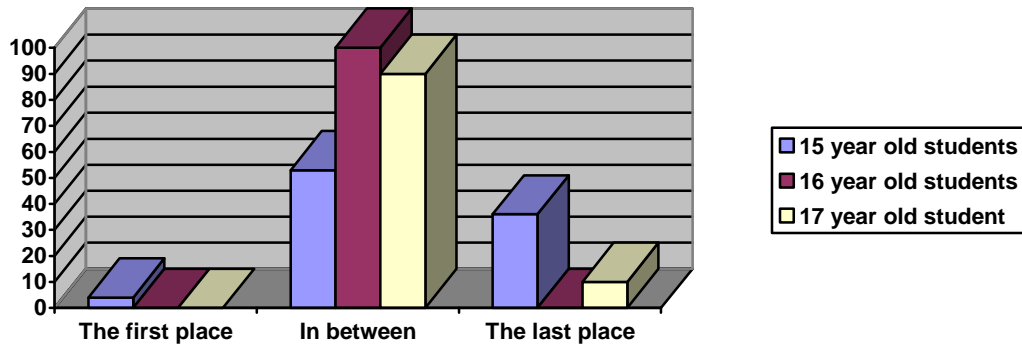
14% (2) of the male students have put this statement in the last place and 86% (12) have put it in between.

16-year-old male students

10% (1) of the students have put this statement in the first place, 30% (3) of the students have put it in the last place and 60% (6) of the students have put it between the first and the last position.

17-year-old male students

All five students (100%) have decided to put this statement between the first and the last.



9. The statement 'I'm learning more eagerly if there's a reward.'

15-year-old male student

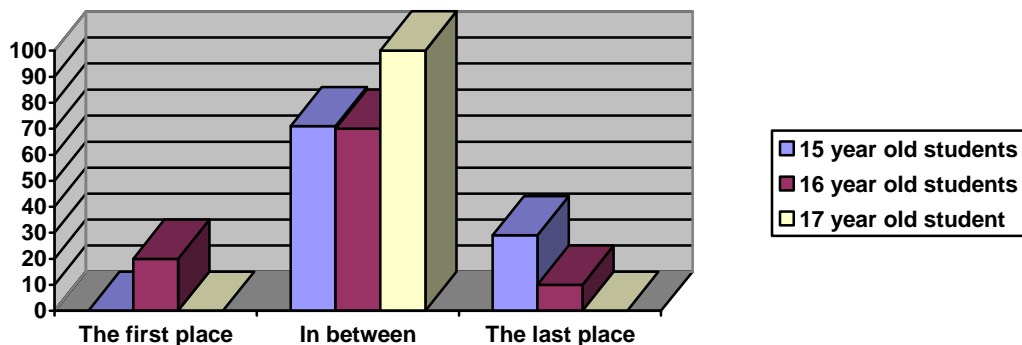
71% (10) of the male students have put this statement in the middle and 29% (4) of the 17-year-old male students have put it in the end.

16-year-old male students

2 (20%) students have put this statement in the first position, 1 (10%) student has put it in the last place and the rest of the students (70%) have put it between these two.

17-year-old male students

All five (100%) students have put this statement in between.



General remarks on the survey

This research has proven that there are not many crucial differences between what motivates male and female students who are between 15-17 years of age. According to the results of the survey, it can be concluded that the biggest part of the surveyed peers

has put the statement '*I'm learning more eagerly when the lessons are interesting*' in the **first** place.

While, on the other hand, the least important thing to students in regard to what motivates them is the statement '*I'm learning more eagerly when I'm learning for my parents*'. The outcome of this result can be comprehended differently. On the plus side is the fact that students do not feel pressured by their parents and that it is their own will to study or not. However, in some cases this kind of pressure can initiate students' will to study which can lead them to successful future.

According to the survey we can notice that the big majority of examinees in my school are mostly being exposed to extrinsic motivation. It is obvious that teachers have a lot to do with their students' motivational level. A student may arrive in class with a certain degree of motivation. But the teacher's behavior and his/her teaching style, the structure of the lesson, the nature of the assignments and informal interactions with students all have a large effect on student motivation.

Conclusion

As I have already elaborated in detail, motivation is what drives students to achieve success. Throughout this essay you have been able to learn the types of motivations students find most and least motivational. The research has proven that every student has different ways of being motivated, but majority of them feels greater influence coming from extrinsic motivation that is produced by *teachers*. Teachers, more than any other people, have the most power to motivate students because they are on the front lines. **If students experience the classroom as a caring place where there is a sense of belonging, where they feel challenged to complete the task, where they feel autonomy in the learning process, where they feel valued, appreciated and respected and where they get support to build their self-esteem, that's the environment that should be provided to every student by his/her teacher.** When teachers succeed in creating this kind of atmosphere students' extrinsic motivation increases and reverses into intrinsic motivation where achievements are guaranteed.

Appendix

Survey

What do teenager learners say about what motivates them? Put the statements into the correct order. Which one tops the list, and which one comes at the very bottom?

I'm leaning more eagerly when...

- ...the subject is easy
- ...I like the teacher
- ...the teacher is demanding
- ...I know that the knowledge is useful
- ...the subject interests me
- ...I'm learning for my parents
- ...the lessons are interesting
- ...I'm not falling behind with the material
- ...I know there's a reward

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