

## Exploratory Study of TARGET Model of Motivation

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### Abstract

The study is designed to explore the use of TARGET model of motivation in university classrooms. This case study also explores, whether the practices of model were used to create mastery climate or ego climate. The sample of the study was comprised of 20 students of B.Ed. (Hons.) program from University of Education Lahore, Pakistan. Participants were selected by using purposive sampling technique. Semi-structured interview schedule was used for the data collection. Data were transcribed and coded into interpretive categories according to the research objectives and questions. Thematic inductive approach was used for analyzing the data. Major findings of this study revealed that teachers were practicing TARGET model as an instructional strategy in university classrooms, although unintentionally in mastery dimension. In a mastery-oriented environment, the focus of students in class was on learning rather than to competition.

**Keywords:** target, mastery climate, ego climate

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## Introduction

In educational context, motivation provides the best way for students to deal with problems, which they face in classroom setting and side-by-side motivation is concerned with the factors that stimulate students' behavior towards desired outcome and able them to achieve the best of their abilities. Baron (1991) and Schunk (1990) explain motivation as the power that strengthens individual behavior to make them engage in a specific activity. Motivation is considered a fundamental component in the learning process and a wide range of factors influence it, but generally the most important recapitulate as intrinsic or extrinsic factors. Both of these factors play an important role in classroom setting as internal motivators satisfy students' intrinsic needs, whereas external factors motivate students to do something by getting some rewards. Therefore, external motivators considered environmental factors (Bassy, 2002).

In the most recent thirty years, numerous models, approaches and theories have propelled researchers studying motivation in educational context. Such perspectives include the needs theory, value expectancy theory, social cognitive theory, attribution theory, goal theory, and intrinsic motivation. These theories have been progressed to clarify how objectives associating with outside and inward factors affect motivation to accomplish.

Ames (1992) has developed a model of motivation that incorporates numerous thoughts about motivation. The TARGET structure emphasized on instructional approach associated to: Tasks i.e. Projects, assignments (T), autonomy opportunities (A), recognition method (R), grouping criteria (G), evaluation practices (E), and time utility (T).

Table 1  
*Components of TARGET*

TARGET	Mastery	Ego
Task	Varied, differentiated, Challenging task	Comparative goals, uni-dimensional & undifferentiated
Autonomy	Leadership opportunities provided to students and involved in decision making	Decision are made by the teachers
Recognition	Students are recognized privately	Students are recognized publically, Normative ability
Grouping	Cooperative mixed ability grouping structure	Groups are structured of same ability
Evaluation	Students are evaluated to improve their learning.	Normative & public

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Time	Flexible time	Fixed time
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TARGET components that influence motivational climate (Ames, 1992; Epstein, 1989)

Ames (1992) used TARGET structure to categorized instructional practices related with a task or ego climate in educational setting to motivate learners. Each element of TARGET model plays its role in a direct or indirect manner to motivate student in class (Ames, 1992). Classroom goal structures were defined by the ways in which various kinds of achievement goals emphasized in the classroom and influence patterns of students' achievement goal orientations (Ames, 1992; Ames & Archer, 1988). Teaching methodologies used by teachers in the classroom communicate differential emphases on goals and students' perception of classroom goal structure influence by it. Students grasp several goals in classroom: The types of goal orientations address in this study are mastery goal orientations and performance goal orientations

Mastery goals are goals based on developing competence within the self, and these goals focus on the mastery of the task also termed task goals, a mastery goal refers to developing one's abilities, mastering a new skill, trying to accomplish something challenging and trying to understand learning materials, whereby learning is valued as an end in it. Contrary to mastery goals, performance goals are based on demonstrating competence or skill at a task in relation to others (Meece, Anderman, & Anderman, 2006).

Patrick, Anderman, Ryan, Edelin, and Midgley (2001) conducted a study at school level. They observed four classrooms that differed in the degree to which students perceived an emphasis on mastery and performance goals. Findings revealed that in high mastery-oriented classrooms, the TARGET model practices focused on learning as an active process and expressed strong positive affect about learning and positive expectations for students. In contrast, information about relative performance, grades and assessment was increasingly salient in classrooms that were identified as highly performance-oriented. Kaplin, Martin and Martin (2007) quoted findings of some correlation studies, conducted mostly in school settings, the results of these studies found positive relations between mastery goals orientation and classroom. Whereas other studies, conducted mainly in college settings did not find such relations (Harackiewicz, Barron, Pintrich, Elliot, & Thrash, 2002).

This research was aimed to explore the existing practices of TARGET model of motivation and further it explores whether the

practices of model were used to create mastery climate or ego climate in university classrooms. TARGET model is a framework that can be utilized in diversified teaching learning settings for developing motivational consideration into teaching plans. The study provides in-depth detail about each element of model: Variety and nature of tasks practiced in students' classroom it may explore whether the tasks with optimal level of difficulty were given to students or of moderate level of difficulty. The study investigated whether the autonomy was exercised in the classroom with the students according to their perceptions and educational needs, whether the students were recognized by the teachers especially who made noteworthy progress. Furthermore, it was also explored that how the groups are structured, friendship based or mixed ability, how the students were evaluated in the class. Finally, it was also explored that the time given to students for the accomplishment of tasks was flexible or fixed and whether the flexible time schedule remained innovative with respect to students learning or there were no contribution made by flexible time in students' learning. The present study addresses the following research questions.

1. What are the existing practices of TARGET model of motivation in the university classroom?
2. How each component of TARGET model contributes to create the mastery climate in class?
3. Which practices of TARGET model create ego climate in the university classroom?

### **Rationale of the Study**

In the context of Pakistan especially at higher education level, no study from qualitative context was found with respect to the utilization of TARGET model at university level. This study carries significance for the teachers at every classroom, as they can maximize students' performance by utilizing each component of TARGET model in classroom. One of the significant aspects of this research for teachers is that they can use TARGET principles when their students get unmotivated. The study showed, how TARGET model help the teachers educators to create instructional opportunities for students to regulate their engagement and participation in the classroom. Although teachers are practicing this model, may be knowingly or unknowingly in every classroom to promote students' motivation to learn. Therefore, this study was designed to explore the existing practices of the model and the practices that are being ignored by the teachers. Research also

investigated the classroom motivational climate structure under the principles of TARGET model whether mastery oriented or ego oriented.

## **Methodology**

It was a case study. A qualitative approach was used to address research questions and objectives. In general, qualitative research techniques are especially useful in discovering the meaning that people give to events they experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Qualitative methods emphasize the researcher's role as active participant in the study (Creswell, 2005). For the present study, the researchers were the key instrument in data collection and the interpretation of findings.

The population of this study was comprised of students of B.Ed. (Hons.) of University of Education, Lahore. Population was delimited to the third year students of B.Ed. (Hons.) programme because they were more likely to have the richest experience of working in groups and engaged in different activities over the period of their studies. The researchers selected 20 students by using purposive sampling technique. Semi-structured interview was selected as tool to collect data because interview is a purposeful conversation between two people or sometimes involving more (Warren, 2002). It provides the opportunity to probe for deeper analysis of the process and experience. The interview was shared with three experts (university teachers) for validation purpose and finally consisted of 10 questions besides four probing questions. The three mock interviews were conducted for ensuring further validity and reliability of the interviewees.

Researchers visited the University of Education to get the list of B.Ed. (Hons.) students from relevant office, and approached the students in their classroom. Researchers explained them the purpose of the study. The students who became willing were interviewed after taking their consent for interview recording and its confidentiality. The researchers started asking pre-structured questions as per interview schedule. During the interview, probing questions were also asked, wherever it was required. Data were collected by taking one to one interviews of the participants. The principal researcher took the assistance of facilitator for keeping key notes. Tape recorder was used for recording of interview. The approximate time for the interview was 25-30 minutes. Twenty students were interviewed within a working week, in March, 2016.

The current investigation utilized an inductive, thematic approach to analyze the data, which is also recommended by Hatch (2002). Mostly qualitative research analyzed inductively because this method allows

participant stories to surface by centering deeply on a particular entity (Hatch, 2002; Mayan, 2009).

## **Results**

The results were drawn by considering the research questions and objectives. The research question 1 of the study was to investigate the existing practices of TARGET, model of motivation: task, autonomy, recognition, evaluation and time. Among all the comments reported by the participants it was found that all the components of TARGET model were practiced in classrooms. Teachers were using every component of model as an instructional strategy.

In order to address the research question 2 “How each component of TARGET model contributing to create the mastery climate or ego climate in class” the participants reported in-depth detail about the use of each component of TARGET model in creating mastery and ego climate. Six main themes: task, autonomy, recognition, grouping, evaluation and time extracted from the data reported by the students and are discussed in subsequent section.

### ***Theme 1: Task***

The "Task" was the first component of TARGET model. It includes assignments, projects, presentations, test, and any other activities, which were given to students in the classroom by their teachers. Four codes: variety of task, nature of task, task value and students' preference for taking easy and challenging tasks were generated under the main theme “Task”.

The data showed that variety of tasks and activities were practiced in students' classroom. The common variety of tasks reported by majority of the respondents were assignments, presentations, tests (oral and written) , jigsaw activities, classroom discussion and quiz such activities were given to students in their classroom, which created learning focused climate in class. Majority of the participants reported that diverse nature of tasks was assigned to various students especially when tasks were given individually.

To explore the reasons for valuing the tasks and activities different reasons were reported by the participants during interview. Majority of the participants reported that they valued the tasks for their learning and to get new experience. The last question about the task was to explore the level of difficulty they found in tasks and activities. Data revealed that

the tasks with moderate level of difficulty were mostly given to the students. Further, students' preferences for taking challenging or easy tasks were also explored. The data showed that maximum number of students preferred to take challenging tasks rather than to easy one. When the reason was asked that why did they prefer to take challenging task? Majority of them said that challenging tasks enhance their learning. One of the participants (P4) reported during interview. "I preferred to do challenging task because the challenging work enhance more learning as compared to easy one which have nothing new in it".

It was found from the above data that variety of tasks, differentiated in nature was practiced in university education classrooms. Further data showed that tasks with moderate level of difficulty were given to students in class. Students preferred to take challenging tasks rather than to easy ones. Varied differentiated and challenging tasks all these indicators contributed to create mastery climate in class. Contrary to these it was found that the first component of TARGET model "task" was not practiced in the way to create ego climate.

### ***Theme 2: Autonomy***

Second component of the TARGET model "Autonomy" addressed the role of autonomy in creating mastery or ego climate. The theme "autonomy" contained two codes provision of autonomy and aspects where the students were free to give their opinion. All the respondents reported that autonomy was provided to them in the class. Maximum students reported that they got autonomy in selection of assignment topics of their own choice and they were also allowed to change their topics. As P5 reported during interview, "well we have choice to select topic of our own choice in assignments".

The data revealed that learner were given autonomy in certain matters. This showed that classroom students' focused. There was consideration of students' opinion in class in certain aspects. That ensured students' enthusiasms towards learning in creating healthy learning environment. It was revealed that provision of learner autonomy contributed to create mastery climate in classroom.

### ***Theme 3: Recognition***

The third component of the TARGET model was "Recognition" that addressed the role of recognition in creating mastery or ego climate. Recognition is sort of appreciation which students received in the class.

During interview majority of the respondents reported that all teachers appreciated them especially when they showed their maximum effort in presentations and assignments. Only few students reported that some teachers showed biased attitude. As P7 reported, "Mostly teachers appreciated to everyone in class when students showed good performance but few teachers were biased towards some students".

To inquire more about recognition the researcher asked whether teachers appreciate students publically or privately. Majority of the participants reported that they were recognized publically in front of all class. Students' views revealed that they felt good when they were recognized publically. P15 reported, "Teachers appreciated us in front of whole class. We feel good and got encouragement to do better for the next time".

The findings showed that majority of the teachers recognized students in class. The teachers recognized variety of intended behaviors and outcomes. It was also found that students got recognition publically instead of privately. Publically recognition enhances students' motivation and they got inspiration for more hard work in future. It was revealed from the data that the third component of the TARGET model was practiced in such a way that it was contributing to enhance and create mastery-oriented climate in the classroom instead of ego climate.

#### ***Theme 4: Grouping***

The fourth component of TARGET model was about the "grouping". The researchers asked the students how the learning activities were structured in their classroom whether in groups or individually; if in groups then how the groups were structured. The responses obtained during interview revealed that, mostly the tasks were given in the form of groups and sometimes on individual bases. Majority of the students reported that groups were structured on friendship based and students have choice to select their group members. It was also reported during interviews when teachers construct group than it was based on mixed ability. The groups were consisting on 4-5 and 5-6 members. Majority of the students reported that there were cooperative learning environment within the group. On the basis of students' comments, it was found that the experience of working in group create healthy learning environment for the students.

#### ***Theme 5: Evaluation***



The researcher asked the students about the evaluation criteria it was normative or criterion. Further, it was also explored whether there were chances available for the students to improve the grades and if there were any chance for that, then what were the nature and condition of chances. Majority of students' answers indicated that their performance was evaluated at the end of the semester in the form of marks and grades. Few students reported that feedback was also given in the form of remarks.

Further, it was also inquired that what was the nature and conditions of chances they availed, the variety of condition reported by the students like when anyone gave poor performance or having some authentic reason than teachers gave them additional assignment. Flexible time provided for the completion of assignment and projects. In support of this one student, P19 said, "Chances to improve the grades were given but only to those students who have some authentic reasons for their poor performance e.g., additional assignments were given to the students".

The findings showed that the evaluation criteria were supportive because chances were given to students for the improvements of grades but under rules. Supportive criteria of evaluation were the main indicator of mastery structure.

### ***Theme 6: Time***

The last component of TARGET model was the time. The researchers asked the students about the allocation of time for the completion of tasks and activities. Whether there was fix time schedule or flexible time, it was found that both of the time schedules were used in classroom for the completion of tasks and assignment in classroom. Findings showed that the utilization of flexible time depend upon the students. Majority of the students completed their works in flexible time while few utilized it in a productive way.

### **Discussion**

The primary focus of the study was "to explore the existing practices of TARGET model in higher education classroom". Results drawn from the findings revealed that all the components of TARGET model; task, autonomy, recognition, grouping, evaluation and time were practiced in B.Ed. (Hons) program, but unknowingly. However, students and teachers were not familiar with the TARGET term collectively, as they have not studied psychology in detail. However, they have common perception

about the use of each component of TARGET model when it was asked exclusively.

Next thing explored was to find out the practices that contributed to create mastery or ego climate. Central element of classroom learning was the design of tasks and learning activities in B.Ed. (Hons.) programme. Findings revealed that greater variety of tasks with diverse nature were practiced in classroom. Tasks involved variety and diversity was more likely to promote interest of students in promoting their learning and such type of task category created mastery oriented classroom. As the students were in 6<sup>th</sup> semester, they had the rich experience of variety of tasks over period of their studies. Parallel to present research findings, the study conducted by Ames (1992), Patrick, Anderman, Ryan, Edelinand, and Midgley (2001) also revealed the same results.

The next target of this study was to investigate the role of learner autonomy in higher education classroom whether it was contributing to create mastery or ego climate. Findings revealed that most of teachers were providing autonomy to their students in certain matters such as in the selection of assignment topic and classroom discussion. An effective distribution of autonomy achieved in this study. Teacher provided students choices and allowed them to set the pace and procedure for their own learning. The psychological rationale for promoting learner autonomy is that students learn better when they are in charge of their own learning (Cotterall, 1995). Similar to these findings Scharle and Szabo (2000) also exposed same result in their study on learner autonomy. Finch (2002) in his research reported the same findings that learner in formal context do not easily take the responsibility of autonomy and do not find it easy to reflect on the learning process.

Next thing to explore about TARGET model was the role of *recognition* in promoting mastery or ego climate. In present study, recognition has the same meaning as the praise and appreciation. In this study, recognition was considered one of the more obvious aspects to maximize students learning. Findings of present study indicated that all teachers appreciated and encouraged students for giving good performance. Variety of students' behaviors and outcomes recognized by the teachers such as, in presentations students' communication skill, their confidence and extraordinary performance, class participation, in time tasks submission and good grades in exams.

Specifically, the present study indicated that students got publically recognition when they showed intended behavior and outcomes. Students have perceived public feedback an encouraging factor which gave them confidence whenever they got a well done in front of whole class. The

major reason of present findings can be the effective use of feedback by the side of teachers. The positive and effective use of publically recognition lead to created mastery climate in classroom. Contrary to present study findings, some previous researchers, e.g. Ames (1992), Treasure and Roberts (1995) reported that public recognition invites social comparison among students in class.

The results regarding next component “grouping” of TARGET model findings showed that students have been working in groups. Study revealed that two ways were followed for the group formation. Mostly students selected their group members on friendship based and sometimes teachers constructed students' groups based on mixed ability. Groups constructed of small and moderate size. It was examined from data that students' group work experience, created cooperative learning environment within group. One of the basic reason may be to choose the members was according to students own choice, so the entire focus of students were on learning and mutual sharing rather than to compete from other members.

The aspects found in present study about students' group work experience in University of Education classrooms likewise, small and moderate size of groups based on mixed ability students and cooperative learning environment within group were contributed to create mastery climate. Consistent with Ames (1992) research findings for a mastery climate, when students placed in mixed ability groups, students of lower ability seem to be getting higher their performance while working with higher ability students.

Another findings revealed by this research was about the supportive evaluation criteria. Students' results were evaluated on the bases of marks, grades and remarks. In presentation, teachers evaluated students' performance on the bases of their interpersonal skills. Results of this study indicated that evaluation criteria were supportive for students the reason behind this finding can be clarified, that absolute marking criteria were used to evaluate students' performance and the chances of grades improvement were available under rules. Very clear and supportive evaluation criteria were used in higher education classrooms therefore; social comparison did not rise among students. Contradictory to this study finding, Treasure and Robert (1995) found that evaluation practices could have harmful effects when they linked to social comparison and such type of practices evoked ego climate in classroom.

The question asked about the provision of flexible time whether it contributed to create mastery or ego climate. Time considered as the most important element in the effectiveness of institutions and an

absolute factor that effected students' learning experience. The findings of the present study revealed that teacher implemented both of the time schedule (fix and flexible) in class for the submission of tasks. The major difference in the findings of the present study and past research can be the level of education as the Ames (1992) conducted research at school level while the present study was conducted at university level.

It is inferred that TARGET model is performing its role in higher education. However, the teachers of the University of Education are not familiar with the TARGET term but the components of model: task, autonomy, recognition, grouping, evaluation and time are practicing highly. This fact is supported during study that these practices of TARGET model associated with mastery climate in classroom, whereas, the practices of TARGET model did not connected with ego-climate in higher education. The learning context in University of Education is cooperative because classrooms are learner centered. Hence, due to being studied in student-centered environment students feel relax and experience lower level of anxiety, which result in their better performance. It seems obvious from present study that mastery climate has positive relation wherever the learning environment is student-centered. In sum, the mastery-oriented classroom context in university of Education providing opportunities to students with emphasis on the importance of understanding, an easier learning path, and a more comfortable atmosphere in which they focus on learning rather than on competition.

### **Recommendations**

- Future research may need to consider TARGET structure in more detail in order to identify a model of best practice at higher education level.
- Any future researcher interested may need to utilize larger sample size and some other research designs to explore the TARGET model.
- Institution should arrange training sessions for the teachers to make them aware of the practical use of TARGET model.
- Teacher educators may need to utilize TARGET framework as an instructional strategy to motivate prospective teacher.

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