

The Motivation for Professional Development

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Abstract

For the activity one has in society, one has undergone an initial formation stage. Experience gathered in time helps coping with requirements as they arise, but standards raise and the necessity for professional development appears. The state is interested in getting superior results and for that a series of changes are implemented. These changes ask for professional development of the employees. In order for them to accept this, the employer should look to motivate them, as motivation, to one extent or the other, determines behavior. Specialists, such as H.A. Murray, C.P. Alderfer, D.C. McClelland, have developed a series of theories about motivation and the satisfaction of needs as a motivator. The satisfaction of material needs in encountered in most theories. As far as teachers are concerned, satisfaction of these needs includes not only food and shelter, but also money for books, thus for professional development. It is known that the motivation of the members of an organization influences the success of that organization. Applying this to a school, the motivation of the teachers would influence, indeed, the performance level of that school. A school that has professional development in its organization culture is successful. The members of the school organization can be motivated for development, among others, through satisfaction of their intellectual needs – attractive formation courses, at a high level, lucrative – can determine essential changes in the teachers' level of competence.

Keywords: motivation, needs, change, professional development.

For the activity one has in society, one has undergone an initial formation stage. With the accumulated preparation, he reaches certain standards, but, as years pass, the “product” requirements change, the standards get higher and one can no longer cope, with just the initial formation. We can take into consideration that the experience gathered sustains him for a while, but the rhythm in which requirements grow is more alert, and in the end he still finds himself overwhelmed by the situation. The necessity of professional formation arises from here.

A system administrator, private or the state itself, he is interested in having superior results and therefore takes into consideration professional development of the employees. In order to get them interested, they need to be motivated. The interest for professional development can come both from the employer and the employee. It is important for the two interests to be convergent towards better results. The desire to change through professional development can also come from both the employer and the employee. But this happens only in the happiest of cases. In most cases, the employer is pro change and pro professional development, and the employee refuses the effort. This is the situation when the employer needs to motivate his employee.

According to the Social Psychology Dictionary, motivation expresses the fact that “at the heart of human condition lies an ensemble of mobiles, tendencies, needs, affects, interests, intentions, ideals” – which sustain the realization of certain actions, attitudes.¹

Motivation acts on behavior, is at the heart of an individual's actions and reactions. A well- motivated individual uses his energy in order to make the best out of his potential, according to his aspirations and expectations. It follows from this, a necessity to know the individual, as well as the requirements he needs to meet in order to establish the motivational policy and the measures that will lead to motivate the individual.

In the ideas developed about motivation, H.A. Murray uses the concept of need. This concept is understood as “an internal non-balance stage, a deficiency, which has the capacity to energize or to generate behavioral responses”.² Maslow has put up a hierarchy of needs, starting with the physiological and security ones as primary needs (inferior), followed by secondary ones (superior), in which he includes social needs, of respect and self-fulfillment (A. Maslow, 1954). The same author reasons that human behavior is largely determined by unfulfilled needs, that one is preoccupied by the satisfaction of his needs, starting with the inferior ones towards the superior ones.

An example from the educational domain is relevant: teachers have small wages, some of them below the survival limit. Their main preoccupation in this case is the satisfaction of the so-called “inferior” needs. They will accept professional development, as long as this leads to the satisfaction of their wage needs, therefore the motivation is only materialistic. In the situation in which the education admin solves this problem, teachers can look to satisfy superior needs.

From a questionnaire applied to a number of 400 teachers, 91.4% of the ones who took development courses had this initiative in order to accumulate points to get a merit salary, not for the improvement of the teaching process.

C. P. Alderfer structures needs into three categories:

- Existential needs – material, their fulfillment depends on factors from the environment
- Relational/belonging needs – man needs to be part of a group, a community and relate with its other members
- Development needs – man needs appreciation; for this, he needs superior results and superior results come from a continuous professional development

Keeping at the level of existential needs is considered by Alderfer as a human regression tendency. He considers that the manager is the one who determines the individual to scale new heights.

We believe that efficient motivation is the one conducive to satisfaction of the development and growing deeds of the person.

¹ *Dicționar de Psihologie Socială*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1981, p.148.

² H.A. Murray, 1970.

In “The Theory of Need Fulfillment”, elaborated by D.C. McClelland, a connection is made between these needs and the cultural level of an individual. The author finds three categories of needs, out of which development needs (reaching own or professional standards) come first. From this approach we find that the individual has an internal craving for performance and does not consider teamwork as necessary. There are no relational/belonging needs, thus. Strongly motivated towards belonging, such a person does not bring firstly the existential needs. The person who is not motivated by development because of cultural level or other reasons, thinks of getting performance as a means of satisfying existential needs. Analyzing the teachers’ reaction from this perspective, we find that they have an adequate cultural level to put development needs first. A great number of them have demonstrated this, but have considered that the existential need will be taken care of by society. In the case in which this existential need is neglected by the society, the need for development slowly disappears, regardless of the cultural level.

The second group of needs in D.C. McClelland’s classification is “the affiliation need”, which corresponds largely to Maslow’s “social needs”. A person might consider different when they manifest such a need:

- They wish for support from the members of their group
- They follow others’ performance level
- They feel better if they are surrounded by positive feelings

The third group is “the need for power”, the individual’s wish to evaluate others, to appreciate them, to decide, and to influence.

The motivational policy, as we have seen, is a profound one. It is not random, no matter the domain. The one who implements it takes into consideration the performance level to be reached, and the people he works with as persons, with their particularities, because the performance level of the organization is determined by the motivation level of the employees. The material needs are not to be neglected either, because their satisfaction motivates the individual to take care of his professional development and the attainment of superior results.

For the teachers, money not only supplies the material needs, but also the necessary conditions to buy books, to keep up to date with the information, to develop professionally through individual study. This way of improvement is more efficient for the teachers, because it insures continuity, and the teacher is always up to date with the latest discoveries in the domain.

If they only got informed once in five years, which is the time in which they have to participate in formation courses, it would be egregious for a teacher, and the professional level would be very low.

The motivation of the group members influences the performance level of the school institution. A school with an organizational culture that pays importance to the professional development is successful.

An important contribution in motivation for professional development should be brought about by the school inspection, not through coercive measures, but through getting people interested in informing themselves and keeping up-to-date. Group and individual talks with the professors are centered on the information problem inside the specialization. The teacher who neglects this aspect should be aware of it, be it because of the fact that students now have a lot of information sources and some of the students could even surpass him.

The school inspection calls for information, makes this need stand out, and mentions the sources for study, pointing at what is important and establishing the time for study, after which they organize a debate with the teachers who have read the selected references.

The school inspection is also the one to organize periodical formation actions. The teachers can be motivated to take part in these courses, if they are attractive, if they find them interesting. If they do not possess these qualities, participation is only superficial. It might also be the case that school inspection reveals some lacks in projecting or conducting the teaching process, or in evaluating the

students. For those teachers, formation is organized according to the problems discovered.

In order for the actions to contribute to improving the process, teachers need to be motivated to participate in them. Just making them take part in these courses is a failure recipe. There are many who go there and attend, but they do not get involved. They do not think of repairing their mistakes, they think of getting the document to attest that they have been there. Most of the ones in this situation consider their sending to courses as a punishment, which they reject.

According to the Romanian educational law, teachers have to go to formation courses once in five years, for the professional development of teachers. First, teachers appreciate that the 280 hours are too much. Secondly, in order to cover this period, teachers have to travel too many times to the formation center. This translates in transportation expenses, room & board, expenses that have to be met by the teachers individually. This aspect determines a considerable decrease in motivation.

A third aspect and the most important is the quality of the courses. Quality management begins with choosing the trainers. It has been shown in practice that those who are successful in these courses must meet certain criteria:

- To master the domain of the course
- To have good communication with the adults and the ones that have superior studies
- To present information in various ways, and support them with scientific arguments and new examples
- To have a sense of humor, to know how to receive humor
- To always bring new information
- To establish connections with the teaching process that the “students” conduct
- To combine lectures with debate and practical activities
- To put to use the positive experiences of the participants
- To know the curriculum for the education-level at which the participants teach
- To handle the necessary equipment for the courses

In order to be efficient, the formation courses need to be attractive, to stimulate the participants’ interest and to take place in a distressed atmosphere and to last a daily acceptable time. They need to be interactive, the participants to produce material or them to keep, and the number of participants also has to be reasonable.

During the courses and when they are finished, the changes that they are to bring about in the teaching-evaluation process need to be clear to the teachers and they need to be determined to do those changes in order to get superior results. This is done through the evaluation done during the course and the final evaluation.

Motivating the teachers for continuous professional development is an important preoccupation, not only for the educational administration, but also for the society as a whole, who cannot neglect the education of their youngsters.

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