

# RESEARCH ABOUT LEARNING MOTIVATION AND THE OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE JOB FOR SENIORS

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## *Abstract*

The ability of individuals to know and learn is big enough that we mustn't censor the multiple resources of education that can take the form of so many other institutions from our society. When they want to know, people have reasons and intentions, and that's a consequence of a long process of reflection. This article presents the conclusions from a study about students' motivation to work in the studied field or in another. The started point was the decision of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education to assess the confidence of a faculty from the number of graduates who want to work at least two years in the studied field after they've graduated. The research was realized on 90 students of the three sections of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences (Psychology, Special Psychopedagogy and Pedagogy), from University "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" of Iasi and highlighted the extent to which the three dimensions of motivation (valence, expectancy and instrumentality) and the two factors that determine it, intrinsic and extrinsic, are responsible for the future choices of students for a job.

*Keywords:* student education, diagnostics of learning motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, interest-attitude for a job.

Learning is one of the forms of human activity that has both purpose and reason as his own. According to the Dictionary of Education, "learning has its own purpose, employed at a level of adaptive end, sent to his subordinate actions (writing, reading, etc.), designed and constructed under specific motivations" [Cristea, 1999].

In the last forty years, researchers have studied student motivation and have learned a great deal about:

- What moves students to learn and the quantity and quality of the effort they invest;
- What choices students make;
- How student motivation is affected by teacher practices and school management;
- How motivation develops;

The purpose of the study was to examine students' learning profile with respect to their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, valence, expectancy, instrumentality and job orientations.

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## Theories of motivation relevant for research

If we refer to the general sense of the term, *motivation*, introduced in the early twentieth century in psychology, means energy dynamic issue of human behavior. After Cosmovici A. (2005), motivation is defined as “impulsive and rational process that occurs when an individual seeks to satisfy specific needs and desires”. In a large sense, motivation integrates needs, interests, intentions, tendencies, ideals underlying the human condition and the achievement of certain actions, deeds and attitudes.

Abraham Maslow developed the Hierarchy of Needs model in USA between 1940 and 1950, and the Hierarchy of Needs theory remains valid today for understanding human motivation, management training, and personal development. Physiological needs such as oxygen and food are at the base of the hierarchy, followed by safety, belongingness, and esteem. Only when these needs have been satisfied can humans fully realize their potential. In realizing their potential and achieving everything they are capable of, an individual becomes a self-actualized person.

Alderfer (1969) considers that there are 3 types of needs: existential (E), relational (R) and growth needs (G). The existential needs are satisfied with decent working conditions, safety, etc; the relational needs involve informal and formal relationships with colleague, friends, leaders and subordinates, and the growth needs relate to people's needs for growth, development, fulfillment of creative potential.

Another model is that of McClelland's achievement motivation, who consider that people make choices in life, according to 3 categories of needs: for achievement, affiliation and power. Knowing what is important to someone, we can know what will turn to and what will motivate him more. Learning to know and learn to do would be replaced by learning to be oriented towards learning.

Herzberg, with Mausner and Snyderman (1959) propose a bifactorial theory of job satisfaction which will be later adapted as a motivational theory. He did a study based on structured interviews in which respondents were asked to describe the work experiences they felt very well or very bad and the duration of these states. The answers of this study were that there are two categories of factors present in the institutions: some of them motivators – called intrinsic, for example: events associated with positive attitudes towards work, etc. and some hygienic, of dissatisfaction, or extrinsic: events associated with negative attitudes towards work related to the context of work, interpersonal relations, working conditions, etc. Based on this data, Herzberg proposed two psychological dimensions: “satisfaction – no satisfaction,” and “dissatisfaction–no dissatisfaction”. He argued that the motivator factors contribute to the experience of satisfaction – no satisfaction and the hygiene factors contribute to the experience of dissatisfaction – no dissatisfaction.

Motivation can be also seen in terms of expected outcomes or rewards. This orientation, mainly developed by Vroom, is called the expectations theory. This model postulates that people take account of the results to be expected and the strategies to be expected that will lead to desired results. People will be so motivated to choose the most appropriate strategies to produce more favorable results. In this model, if a person wants a promotion and expect for this to work harder and longer, then, that person will be motivated to put more effort to achieve the desired result. The important factors in Vroom's model are:

- Expectation – perception of someone who expects that a certain result will be obtained after a result of certain actions. Result - refers to the purpose of the chosen behavior. Results may occur on first or second level. For example, someone may decide to work harder in order to finish early (first-level outcome), leading to a high rating (second-level outcome).
- Valence - is attachment or preference of a person for a particular result. Valences can be positive (pay, promotions and interesting tasks) or negative (reprehension or transfer).
- Instrumentality – is the perceived relationship between the results of the first and second level. This can be quantified with values between 1 and -1. If the result of the first level (work completed earlier) always leads to a positive evaluation (second level outcome), instrumentality to each other is 1. This result may be closer to 0 when there is no perceived relationship or instrumentality, or -1 when it is considered that the outcome of the second level can't be achieved as a result of the first level.

Processes involved in theory expectations includes analyzing a situation and determinate the value of certain results. If valence is high, and that person believes that between actions and desired outcome is a close relationship and has the ability to perform the action, will have a strong motivation to choose and perform that action. Moreover, even if a particular outcome valence is high, if the person cannot identify the action by which it can obtain the result or feels that it does not have the skills to perform it, motivation to engage in action will be predictably low.

Specialists concerned with organizational issues such motivation recognize that certain aspects of an activity itself can create prerequisites for the individual to be satisfied with it, without receiving external incentives.

### **Theoretical considerations on the relationship between motivation and learning**

Although very important, but controversial and wide, the concept of motivation is required only in the twentieth century. Despite many approaches, most researchers think about the motivation, as a system of heterogeneous and dynamic psychological factors that determine an individual's behavior and activity [Verza, p.220].

Motivation has long been considered by psychologists and educators as an important factor that affects student learning and achievement. It is a common contention that adaptive motivational orientations facilitate learning while maladaptive ones impede it.

Learning motivation is a specific form of motivation, considered in relation to the learning activity and human cognitive activity. Learning motivation was the subject of several scientific concerns researchers J. Piaget, H. Lowe, R. Gagne, J. R. Kidd, etc.

Learning motivation is a general notion that includes “processes, methods and means that determine personality productive cognitive activity, the active acquirement of educational content. It allows personality to establish not only the direction but also methods for various types of learning activities, to train in this process the volitive affective sphere of personality [Kidd, 1981].

To understand the motivation, institutions must first understand why people behave a certain way and have certain reactions in unpleasant situations. Motivation is an internal process and not an imperative that can be imposed from outside. Knowing a person's motivation is equivalent to finding the answer to the question 'why?' does him something. The answer is difficult because the causes are multiple and can't be reduced to external stimulus. For some psychologists, the reason is the generic name of any component of motivation being defined as a psychological phenomenon that triggers, directs and supports energy activities.

Undoubtedly, “life is a universal educational environment”. The Czech educator Jan Amos Comenius affirmation, that the entire life is a school that supports this view. However, the human nature develops in predictable directions: towards a greater independence and a greater personal responsibility. The trend is towards development 'self, the self-regulation, autonomy based on acceptance the control of external forces [Kidd, 1981].

John Dollard said: “The learner is a person who wants something, the learner is a person who sees something, the learner is a person who does something, is a person who acquires something”. Note that all these verbs are active. At all ages, learning is the active part, not the passive part of the process: the learner open himself, work hard, accumulate, incorporate experience, report it to his previous experience, develop the experience, show their personality. The essential part of teaching and learning is how to help the learner to actively engage in this experience, progressive, transformative, painful or refreshing, that we call learning. In this sense may mean targeting, activation, vivification, challenge, involvement or other mechanisms with intrinsic-extrinsic nature.

## Methodological research

Starting from the conclusion of Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education the universities in Romania doesn't motivate students enough and we mean not only attractive facilities and scholarships, but also the quality of information received, conditions of practice or the possibility of a job market integration. Therefore, it is considered that an internal evaluation, provided by students, could be for the managers and school leaders an answer to improve the educational process. According to the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, students satisfaction can be ensured by respecting actual requirements and students objectives A university will receive full credibility if the number of graduates who will work in study after graduation, for at least 2 years will be more than a half.

According to statistics, most graduates are unsatisfied with how the university prepared them for the transition to employment. More than half say that vocational guidance enjoyed in college was often only formal. The link between school and labor market is weak, and opportunities to learn by applying knowledge gained in formal situations are rare. Practical applicability of the courses is questioned by a half of the graduates surveyed.

The principal aim of this research was to explore the interrelations among those four variables to decide which is essential in learning process and a future choice of a job. The subjects were seniors from the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, a total number of 90 students – 30 Psychology, 30 Special Education and 30 Pedagogy, 12 boys and 68 girls.

The questionnaire on learning motivation in students contain 3 subscales, each subscale containing 14 items, 7 for intrinsic values and 7 for extrinsic values, with 3 different response options for each subscales.

Construction of questionnaires was based on Vroom's theory developed around three basic elements: expectancy (effort-performance relationship), instrumentality (performance-outcome relationship) and valence (results value). Items of each subscale were equally correlated with intrinsic and extrinsic factors, after the theory of Herzberg.

The 14 aspects surveyed:

- 1) The content of school work (which is present in courses, seminars, practice);
- 2) Opportunities to use and develop the creative capacities;
- 3) Passion for their chosen field;
- 4) Educational aspiration level: promotion to higher categories, selection into work teams in college;
- 5) Personal affirmation: integration and hierarchical promotion team;
- 6) The performance: to be the best, to win;
- 7) Fear of failure: failure, defeat, accidents, enemies, security trend;
- 8) Norms of school work: laws, statutes, regulations;

- 9) Material benefits and features: scholarships, awards, diploma;
- 10) Social climate: family, peers, teachers, press, radio, TV, etc.;
- 11) Social prestige: of the faculty, of the teacher, his own prestige;
- 12) The leadership style applied by teachers, head of year, administration;
- 13) Life-school relationship: the possibility of being an honors student and fulfill other roles;
- 14) Material conditions: courses, rooms, schedule.

The first questionnaire subscale measured *the valence* – the emotional dimension of motivation, expressing attraction or rejection to intrinsic or extrinsic factors interviewed. This dimension of motivation helped us to identify the most important and the least important aspect in student learning motivation.

*E.g. item: "In your work, providing opportunities for developing skills in a creative way you think it is:*

- a) very important
- b) a little important
- c) unimportant.

The second subscale of the questionnaire measured *the expectancy* - the cognitive dimension who expressed the subjective probability of getting a result.

*E.g. item: "I believe that faculty norms (laws, statutes, regulations, etc.):*

- a) correspond to your expectations
- b) correspond only sometimes to your expectations
- c) do not correspond to any of your expectations.

The third subscale of the questionnaire measured *instrumentality* – a parameter that reveals the level where a valence can be achieved or not by themselves. This dimension of motivation helped us to identify the aspect that may/may not be controlled by the subjects when we talk about school motivation.

*E. g. item: "In achieving the desired results, the material conditions provided (classes, rooms, material basis, schedule, etc.):"*

- a) fully depend on you
- b) depend equally on others and you
- c) fully dependent on others

The final question of the questionnaire is the option to work in the area over the next 2 years after graduated and the motivation of the choice. This will help to identify if those who are motivated intrinsic or extrinsic in the learning process, will be also motivated mostly intrinsic or extrinsic when they'll choose a future job.

#### *Research and discussion*

After collecting the data and entered them into the database using SPSS, it was calculated the internal consistency coefficient - Alpha Cronbach for each subscales of the questionnaires, obtaining values that validate the questionnaire (subscale 1 -  $\alpha = 0.676$ , subscale 2 -  $\alpha = 0.753$ , subscale 3 -  $\alpha = 0.698$ , total score questionnaire -  $\alpha = 0.665$ ).

For the first subscale of the questionnaire measuring *valence*, statistical processing for all students (N = 90) have identified a significant percentage that attaches great importance to: the possibility of developing skills in a

creative way - 83.3% (item 2) and the maintenance and develop of passion for their chosen field - 78.9% (item 3). Equally important are the extrinsic aspects in learning motivation, for 67.8% of students matter material advantages and facilities offered (item9), 66.7% - the social climate generated by the family, press, media, etc., 63.3 % - can be simultaneously a student with honors and fulfill other social roles and 64.4% provided the material conditions (accommodation, classrooms, etc.).

The results for the second subscale – expectancy (effort-result rapport), identified a significant percentage of students who feel unsatisfied by: the possibility to be the best, to win, to advance - 22.4%, the norms and regulations established by the faculty - 43.3% and the material advantages they can get - 32%.

The lack of continuous and real support of the faculty on the problems that students interact daily will decrease motivation and implicitly, the performances. Studies have shown that many people give up the desire to continue an activity without satisfaction.

The subscale who evaluated the instrumentality have identified the aspects that in students vision can be resolve only with their forces: maintaining the passion developed for the studied field-64.4%; the possibility of personal affirmation - 54.4% and the necessity to be the best - 46.7%. Instead, theoretical and practical contents of activities are totally dependent on others (institutions' managers), agree 48.9% of the students from all the departments.

After statistical processing performed in SPSS, using the option Selected Cases, were identified only those students who answered with “yes” to the question “Do you want to work after graduation in the studied field for at least 2-3 years?” With the help of these answers it was created the motivational profile.

The fact that for all the departments was obtained a score above average (Psychology - 93,33%; Special Psychopedagogy – 82.76% and Pedagogy – 89.29%) at the option to work in the studied field, promotes the idea that the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences has a high level of credibility among students. The study was unable to control other types of motivation that could have induced a positive answer, such as the need for a job or the impossibility to work in another field, etc. The overall percentage of students who have expressed a desire to work in the studied field for at least two years after graduation – 84.43% (N = 90), is a fact gratifying and encouraging.

Those students perceive as reasons for their choice: the passion for the field, the desire to help people with SEN (Special Education Needs), for experience and progress, because they want to make a career in this field, the need to escape routine, to share ideas, to entertain, to get access to interesting occupations, etc. Those reasons are both intrinsic and extrinsic. The first ones feel an interior motivation for knowledge, are passion for a

particular area and recognize the pleasure of learning, no matter other issues. The others must be stimulated from the outside in different ways: money, fame and recognition, awards and prizes, status and privileges, and even bribery, threats and punishments. Extrinsic motivation exists even if satisfaction and pleasure in performing the task is absent.

We note that for students of Pedagogy Department to justify the option of working in the studied field is very important the passion, the interest, the curiosity, the need to broaden professional, and this is the factor that the students are satisfied in a percentage of 43.3%, opposite to the possibility to be the best, to advance and win which is the fact that do not correspond to any of students' expectations (30%).

The same feature is founded to the students of Psychology Department, where the passion for the studied field is one of the factors most frequently relied on the answers to the last question, and also a very important aspect for a rate of 70.1% of students. Other motivations were: the ability to interact with specialists, to do what they like and what they do best. Unlike the Pedagogy Department, where we identify mostly intrinsic reasons, in this case, there are also extrinsic reasons, for example: their own development, the prestige of the field, the possibility to gain experience and to make a career, etc.

For the students of Special psycho-pedagogy, the mainly reasons are also the passion for the field, the desire to help and interact with specialists or the professional development, the need to establish new social contacts, to enter into relationships with others, to ensure a status favorable to shine socially. The reasons why some students from Special Psycho-pedagogy Department stated that they don't want a career in this field have been those related to the remuneration and the fact that the field is not what they've believed.

The lack of significant differences between departments reinforce the results for each subscale of the questionnaire and the idea that if there is something who brings dissatisfaction for students is rooted in an outside individual level, but who is interior and specific for the institution that ensure the knowledge of a specific field. The image reflected by the theory, the faculty practice shouldn't be different than they actually are, otherwise the quality of future services will decrease greatly and we will have on the jobs market individuals who remain in the field because they had no other choice.

### **Conclusions and pedagogical implications**

The psychosocial condition of learning at students arises from the need/desire/aspiration/interest of subject to change his professional, social or familial status. The pedagogical approach of motivation is clear from its characteristic as a phenomenon liable to grow and develop. But, the educational process cannot form grounds, but can contribute to their training;

the reason is a complicated psychological formation that is built only by the subject. In the educational and socialization process of personality the individual develops formations, such as interests, skills, moral principles, guidelines and self-evaluation. They are building parts used to justify activities and behavior. Therefore, from outside we cannot form reasons, but we can form motivators and with them – the motivational sphere of personality.

In learning process, the individual is exposed to the influence of a complex system of material, social and spiritual incentives, reasoning in the motivation process involved in these activities. Most of the times, in formal education, the goals are set by teachers in the form of requirements and rules which became tasks for students [Cosmovici, 2005]. Many students complete tasks that they do not value all that much simply because they expect some sort of reward (e.g. high marks, a pass, or social approval). Students that undertake learning tasks purely for the sake of getting a reward from others, or in order to avoid some penalty, are extrinsically motivated. An activity is generally considered to be intrinsically motivating if external reward is not necessary for students to initiate and continue that activity. Favorable motivational beliefs are attached to the activity itself. Students who are intrinsically motivated will report that they do not have to invest effort and that doing the activity is gratifying.

According to SDT (Self-Determination Theory) we can describe a person's motivation as a route from demotivation or the absence of motivation, passing through different stages of extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation. On this route, the concept of internalization described how motivation for school behavior can be described by a lack of motivation or resentment to passive acceptance to active acceptance and personal involvement.

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