

MOTIVATION AS PART OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

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Abstract: School expects all pupils to be motivated. But the truth is there is a big difference between ideal and reality. Some pupils are motivated from the beginning and stay that way all their life, other pupils lose their motivation along the way, some appear to never have been motivated and there is also a category with those who become motivated in time. A lot of questions spring from this situation. How come some pupils are motivated and some not? Why some pupils give up and in the end quit school? Is the saying “Education pays off” still valid, after moving generations? What solutions are there in order to support and motivate children in their education? In the research I have made with my students I have tried to find the reasons that provoke motivation or demotivation in learning.

Key words: intrinsic motivation; extrinsic motivation; learning; education;

Introduction

In specialty literature there are several motivation types, but in the educational activities the most important are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation represents joy and satisfaction you get from the learning process, exploration and understanding something new. Extrinsic motivation deals with achieving certain desirable behaviours or certain educational objectives through gaining a reward or avoiding a punishment or sanction. Psychologists such as I. Pavlov (1849-1963), J. B Watson (1878-1958) and B. F. Skinner (1904-1990) have considered the human behaviour through the prism of social conditioning, like answers learned through experience and survival needs.

In 1980 J.J. Rousseau published “Emile” – in this book education was approached through the games perspective. During the following 200 years several ideas appeared which have developed educational systems “centred on the child” promoting games and creativity in the development of personality. We can name here J. Pestalozzi (1746-1847), R. Steiner (1861-1925), M. Montessori (1870-1952), F. Froebel (1782-1852), C. Orff (1895-1982) and J. Dewey (1859-1952). For these educators learning was a natural process, a natural development of children’s capacities, without being subjected to a standardized instruction and seen as a whole: body, mind and soul. They also insisted that academic education ignored the essential elements of the human being, such as: intuition, emotions, creativity and aesthetic education.

“The intellect cannot work at maximum capacity without emotional intelligence. The relationship between intellect and sentiment can be found at the centre of the creative processes in all fields, including in art and sciences.” Sir Ken Robinson (2011, p. 229).

According to the principle of the cognitive approach of motivation, the way in which a pupil is engaged in a task is very strongly influenced by the representations he has of the situation and about himself: “their perception about the controllability of the situation, their perception about the purpose of school (or of the teacher / teachers) and their concept of intelligence ... The human being always searches for an explanation for what is going on. They always attribute a cause to a happy or unhappy event.” M. Crahay (2009, p. 405). The most important theory about the motivation of the human beings is that of A. Maslow – Maslow’s Pyramid of Needs. The needs are placed hierarchically as follows: **physiological needs** (in order for children to learn they need to be in a favourable state, to be fed, rested, not cold etc.); **safety needs** (in order to feel secure children need an environment that gives them organization, predictability, what to look forward to, and the level of expectations should be according to age and individual); **belongingness and love needs** (the relation and

connection in class between teacher and pupils is very important); **esteem needs** (achievement of children's needs such as: autonomy, freedom of speech, freedom of choice, social adequacy, appreciation and attention from others, prestige, positive feedback from teachers, support, self-respect; the lack of satisfaction of such needs leads to inferiority feelings, inadequacy, helplessness and incapacity; self esteem is a key factor in the activation of motivation for learning); and **self-actualization needs** (the need to speak up and realization of one's full potential – each pupil should be supported and encouraged to become whatever he is!). “Even if these needs are satisfied we can often (if not always) expect for another discontent or unease to appear in cases when the individual does not do whatever suits him. Musicians should make music, artists should paint and poets should write poetry if they want to be content with themselves. People should be whatever they can be. They must stay true to their nature.” A. Maslow (2007, p.93).

According to Sir Ken Robinson “one of the most important roles of teachers is to bring into the light the uniqueness of each child” (2011, p. 221).

Methodology

The research was conducted during January-June 2018 period. The sample group was made up of 50 students from approximately all faculties, 1st, 2nd, 3rd years and Master from U.V.T. The research method was qualitative, namely the semi-structured interview, with the following key questions: if the subject has felt motivated during the learning process, what caused their motivation, who was the motivator (family, school etc.), during which grades / period has the subject felt more motivated, what sort of motivation was prevalent (intrinsic or extrinsic), in what way was their personality influenced and developed etc.

Research objectives:

- Identification of reasons that cause learning in the educational process;
- Explanation of the difference between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation;
- Analysis of the way in which extrinsic and intrinsic motivation influence personality development.

Research hypothesis:

The more learners are intrinsically motivated, the more they are interested to learn.

Results

Next, I will present a selection of results from the interviews. In order to preserve their anonymity, the students that took part in the interviews will not be mentioned by name and the faculty where they study will not be specified.

1. F. C.

1st-4th grades. I believe I was most motivated during that period. I had an extraordinary teacher who molded our behavior with excellent skill. She made us ambitious and caused us to have a constructive competitiveness among us. She encouraged our self-confidence and made us be independent in our decisions and follow our most authentic way. This is the reason why in the 4th grade I took the first important decision in my life, without consulting anyone, and it turned out to be beneficial for my future. I registered myself in the Voley Club! After that I went home and informed my mother of my decision and for 12 years I did not give up on this decision!

5th-8th grades. I was motivated by marks and by trying to achieve the maximum in each discipline. I had very demanding teachers who gave us the impression that in their discipline it was very hard to excel. And it was true! Playing sports continued to give me balance and ambition. My schedule was very well organized. The satisfaction that I felt on

the sports ground was something that I searched for in other fields as well. This thing motivated me and made me more competitive.

9th-12th grades. During this period I was motivated by the other pupils and the group that I was part of – it was an elite group and my motivation was very high because of them.

During University my intrinsic motivation was much more powerful. At the same time, because I have chosen a major that I believed was not compatible with my psychological profile, I was motivated to prepare myself better than other colleagues. My level of preparation led to good results and appreciation from everybody (colleagues, teachers), which has encouraged me to continue on the chosen road and even to identify myself with this field. Also, during this same period I have discovered my calling. Actually, my discovery may have come during secondary school, but now I was certain. Definitely my mother and my pedagogy teachers have strengthened my belief and have helped me find some high goals in the educational respect.

2. P. C.

During my 1st-4th grades I was motivated by the idea to be the best and by the rewards received from the teacher (good marks, verbal appreciations etc.).

In secondary school, besides my motivation I had teachers that knew how to motivate me to want to know more, to research and to go deeper in certain fields. I can name here my history and my English teachers.

During high-school my motivation to learn was applied most to specialty subjects, while the rest of the subjects were left in a secondary plan, but not abandoned. During the last year of high-school I think the Baccalaureat exam play a major motivational role for most pupils.

During faculty motivation to learn is connected to the desire to accumulate as much information while you still have time and while you are still in the period where you are not preoccupied with other factors such as work, family etc.

3. F. F.

1st-4th grades – During this period I do not believe I was motivated to study just for the sake of studying, but it was more as a consequence of the fact that I liked going to school. I liked my teacher and I was very satisfied every time I would do something right, when I got a good mark on a test or had a very good homework.

5th-8th grades – It was a rather weird period for me because of the passage from a school with alternative pedagogy to a vocational school. I was not used to learn for marks but rather for personal satisfaction. Even so, after I got used to the new system I realized I still liked going to school and to learn. During my 8th grade this became a major motivational factor, especially since I had to take the capacity exam.

9th-12th grades – During this period my most important motivation was to excel in my specialty subjects. Besides these I really enjoyed studying the subjects I liked: Romanian language, philosophy, psychology and history. I had little motivation to study subjects such as mathematics or physics and I considered them lost time.

University – Now I can say that I am motivated to work hard and that I want to excel in almost all subjects. In faculty I realized that in order to be an interpretive artist you must be familiar with all aspects of music – this is exactly what motivates me and makes me curious about all the things we study in faculty.

4. B.F.

1st-4th grades – marking system based on getting bonuses for active involvement in school activities.

5th-8th grades – material rewards, sweets, financial rewards, marks replaced by research papers and projects.

9th-12th grades – material and financial rewards, marks for tests and oral reports replaced by papers and projects.

University – bonuses given for fulltime presence in class, material and financial rewards, scholarship for good studying results.

5. R. D.

1st-4th grades – marks were an external motivator, I wanted my family to be proud of me.

5th-8th grades – to be better than before, so that I don't disappoint my teachers and family.

9th-12th grades – when I was in the 12th grade I wanted to get a good mark at the Baccalaureat and this motivated me for the whole year.

University – to know as much as possible, to be a well prepared person in my field, financial rewards such as a scholarship and career opportunities.

6. L. K.

1st-4th grades – I liked some of the subjects but I studied others just to make my parents happy.

5th-8th grades – the desire to grow in the eyes of my favourite teachers and my family.

9th-12th grades – the desire to outdo myself, to improve and to be the best.

University – the desire to find a job in my field and to do what I always wanted.

7. J. G.

1st-4th grades – I learned for knowledge, for the desire to know more and to accumulate information.

5th-8th grades – I studied in order to be among the best and to get into the high-school I wanted

9th-12th grades – I studied to get good marks, to get the first prize and to feel proud of myself.

University – I study for myself, in order to know as much as possible, but I don't study for grades because I am annoyed by the injustice I see every day.

8. R. F

1st-4th grades – in order to make the teacher happy and get “prizes” from her. For the satisfaction of my parents and getting praises and rewards such as going to camps, going on trips, various objects (bicycle, scooter etc.), but also for my internal satisfaction of being appreciated in front of the other colleagues and relatives.

5th-8th grades – I studied most of all because I was “forced” by my parents but there was also the motivation to get good marks in the exam to enter a very good high-school.

9th-12th grades – my motivation became more intrinsic, because I started learning in order to know certain information, but also because I liked / disliked certain teachers. Also, during the 12th grade I was motivated to study for the Baccalaureat in order to get a 2-week holiday in Italy.

University – although I often find myself learning to get good marks, I stopped learning to please my parents and I started concentrating more on myself. I study with more pleasure for certain subjects and I do additional research work, but for the subjects that I consider useless I just study to get a good mark. The scholarship is a good motivation, but also the satisfaction of knowing more than my colleagues who are my competitors.

9. P. M.

I was always in a class with good pupils and I wanted to be the first.

1st-4th grades – competition, parents, self-motivation, marks, alternative pedagogy (this was seen as a negative thing), the thing that I will not be able to work by myself – this made me more ambitious and I started learning better to prove that I can do it.

5th-8th grades – competition, parents, and marks.

9th-12th grades – competition, desire to know, marks, scholarship, and fear of failure.

University – competition, desire to know, surpassing my own level, marks, scholarship, desire to be assert myself, and fear of failure.

10. S. H.

1st-4th grades – money, sweets, sometimes fear of my parents.

5th-8th grades – fear of my parents, desire to go to a good high-school, not wanting to be embarrassed and for rewards we received at the end of the year.

9th-12th grades – to be among the best in my class and have a good name, because this is how I felt appreciated.

University – in order to prove my mother that I am good for something, so that I can get a job and be an example for my brothers.

11. M. J.

I only had high marks form 1st to 12th grades. I must admit that I did not like all the subjects but then I learned in order to get a food mark, because I could not stand to see anybody is better than me or get better grades than me! I have worked all the time to build a certain image for myself and to keep it, especially because my mother did not trust me and I was trying to prove that I was the best! I think this happened also because I was compared all the time with my older sister, who went to the same schools as me. She was also a very good student! I have taken part in the national Olympics contest and I got many awards.

12. G. D.

1st-4th grades – I was ashamed of my teacher.

5th-8th grades – competitive nature, I wanted just highest marks, in order to get into the desired high-school.

9th-12th grades – ambition, the Baccalaureate exam, going to the desired faculty.

University – the desire to outdo myself, ambition, competitive nature, scholarship, I always wanted to be among the best.

13. R. P.

1st-4th grades – my motivation to learn did not come from the teachers. I got good grades because I was motivated, I had moved from the country to the city and I wanted to prove that children from the country are not less capable. My mother encouraged me to study, she checked my homework, listened to me and scolded me when I did not want to study. At those moments I felt that learning was something imposed on me, something hard to do, and needing efforts that I would not make except if I was scolded.

5th-8th grades – in secondary school the pupils who studied were praised in class and those who got bad marks were scolded and made to study. At first I was motivated to study in order to get the sympathy of people around me. While learning I started to discover that certain subjects gave me information that I wanted to go deeper in.

9th-12th grades – I was studying because I got used to being the good pupil.

University – at first because of the scholarship, then because I wanted to learn new information about the subjects that I liked.

14. M. A.

1st-4th grades – I learned because of my mother who was always involved in my homework, gave me dictations in orthography and taught me how to correct my mistakes. Even if sometimes I did not feel like learning, I did not have a choice.

5th-8th grades – in order to please my mother who was making efforts to pay for my tutoring lessons (for English and for the subjects in the capacity exam).

9th-12th grades – during high-school I was a mediocre student, I liked to study and be seen as diligent but there were many factors that stopped me and diminished my motivation to learn for school.

University – I study because I want to, because it's my passion, ambition and vanity. I aspire to prove myself that I can do it and to keep my place among the subsidized students.

15. E. B.

1st-4th grades – my desire to finish studying as quickly as possible in order to go out and play.

5th-8th grades – at first I did not have any motivation; while in the 8th grade I started studying in order to get into a good high-school.

9th-12th grades – in order to get into faculty.

University – the thought that I am closer to going into a profession that I have wanted for a very long time.

16. G. A.

1st-4th grades – during primary school I was learning because I had to, I was not really conscious about the purpose of learning.

5th-8th grades – during secondary school I was studying for fear of the teachers. They did not do anything to me but were very authoritarian, hard, and cold and I saw how they treated other pupils that were not very good. I attended one of the best high-schools, with very high standards, I did not like it but my father wanted me to go there.

9th-12th grades – during high-school I started learning for myself. I moved to the Art High-School. This was the moment when I started to talk more and be more open to communicate. The teachers were warm and friendly and encouraged me to express my opinions. In high-school I met a geography teacher who became my role model – a very professional person, sensitive, modest, who involved us in all activities in order to demonstrate that we can learn anything if we wanted.

University – one of the main reasons I got into this faculty is my high-school geography teacher.

17. U. A.

1st-4th grades – my teacher was also my second aunt and I always wanted to prove to her that I was the best and that I deserve 1st prize. Also the corrections I got at home made me want to learn as good as possible in order not to disappoint.

5th-8th grades – my marks were lower, it was my rebellious period when school was not on the first place for me, but I also did not want to be among the last in class, especially since our class master always made a classification of our marks, and it made me want to be at least in the first half.

9th-12th grades – my motivation was to get good marks in order to manage to get into faculty. I was fighting for a subsidized place because I could not afford to pay for faculty.

University – In faculty I learned to get a good scholarship, to keep myself on the subsidized places but after I saw that all the students in my year were on subsidized places my motivation decreased and I only wanted a place in the state dorm and to take my exams.

18. A. A.

1st-4th grades – I was afraid of what the teacher will say and I did not want my parents to scold me.

5th-8th grades – I was afraid my parents and my maths teacher will punish me and I was afraid of taking a low mark in the 8th grade exam.

9th-12th grades – my desire to surpass some of my colleagues and to prove to them that I can do it too; my fear of having problems with maths – I had the same teacher as in secondary school; my desire to take the Baccalaureate exam and to get into a good faculty.

University – the desire to be the best; the desire not to disappoint my family; my desire and passion to know and study in depth as many things as possible.

19. C. X.

1st-4th grades – not to disappoint my mother.

5th-8th grades – I did not want to disappoint my mother.

9th-12th grades – the history teacher, my motivation to read and becoming conscious of my own gaps.

University – intrinsic motivation and my desire to become emancipated from my family.

20. T. R.

I learned even at subjects that I did not like so that I would not disappoint my parents, teachers, and colleagues.

The results of the interviews show that up to 9th grade extrinsic motivation is predominant: praise, prizes, marks, appreciation, positive socio-affective relations, fear of not disappointing significant people, desire to get into a good high-school etc. During high-school and faculty besides the extrinsic motivation the intrinsic one starts to develop: curiosity about knowledge, satisfaction gathered from informational content, the need and joy to know and understand as much as possible in order to be good in your future profession etc.

Conclusions

Learning is a human need that we all have in us. Children are born with a great desire to learn. This desire must be sustained, encouraged and supported by the educational system. Children will go to school with pleasure if the learning tasks are pleasant, interesting, provocative, full of meaning and relevant. Learning must cause joy. When children discover they like something they will excel and perform best. Losing the joy of learning will have consequences in the adult life, we will become bored, without desire to work, waiting for the weekend to come. Work will become something difficult because this has been our experience in school, homework has felt like a chore or an obligation. The child needs to keep his sense of autonomy, the freedom to choose his own rhythm, to choose the high-school and faculty he wants and the way to study. We are not their superiors and they are not some empty vessels that we try to fill with information!

Competition is frequently used in the Romanian educational system with the purpose to mobilize, but to the contrary – it affects the self esteem of the child. I consider that intrinsic motivation is the one that leads to the joy of the experiences, of the things done well, by exploring and learning new things and implicitly to an elevated self esteem.

Intrinsic motivation represents the flame of curiosity and adults are the ones that need to light it inside every child and to find methods to keep it burning. It must come from the inside, and be the trigger and driving force of curiosity. Curiosity leads to implication in the educational experiences, the responsibility of tasks and conscious choice. Even if some activities seem difficult at first sight, they must be achieved with the purpose of consequent

finality. Children must understand what are the reasons for which they must study mathematics, literature, geography etc. and what purpose they serve in real life. During the teaching-learning process “curiosity should precede, accompany and follow cognitive activities taking place in and outside school.” Ioan Neacșu (1978, p. 45).

Extrinsic motivation is generated through the reward-punishment system. At first children are easy to impress with toys, sweets, little treats and the marks, prizes, praises, appreciation, money and material goods becoming more and more expensive, or they are terrorized with threats, insults, criticism, humiliation etc. In time we will determine children to do what we want but this does not mean they will be happy and will do everything, will learn in order to impress their mother or teacher, in order not to disappoint the others but themselves! The rewards transfer the sense of activities towards the materials goods, achieving conditioning and to learning in itself. Extrinsic motivation in timewears down intrinsic motivation and children lose their interest in learning.

What kind of adults do we want to form? Do we want them to be dependent on various rewards, other people’s applause, obedient, hungry for tomorrow’s acknowledgement or do we want them to confident in themselves and self-motivated by what they are doing?

In the Finnish educational system, which is considered to be one of the best in the worlds, ambition is replaced with passion, competition being relegated to second place. In the Romanian educational system competition takes centre stage and the price for it is the loss of humanity. Usually in the Romanian educational system the attention is focused on the pupils that have high academic intelligence and who form the elite. In reality pupils are divided into two categories: Olympics-level ones and the “others”. I think we must shift our attention to the “others” and to help them identify their resources, to develop their abilities and to make them become conscious of what brings them joy and what is the dream it’s worth fighting for. Sir Ken Robinson considers that young people should be supported in “discovering things that want them to be good at and to consolidate their will and abilities to research these.” (2015, p. 169, 170).

Achievement and self esteem, creation if a positive image, for oneself and in a group, development of authenticity and building happiness are some things that can be achieved through that “something” that touches on their intrinsic motivation, without waiting to be “applauded” by others.

Carol S. Dweck, psychology teacher at Stanford University, renowned for the research of motivation and success talks in her book “Mindset” about two types of mentality: rigid and flexible. She demonstrates that “the opinion you have about yourself has a great influence on your life” (2017, p. 15). According to Carol S. Dweck “we are all born with a strong tendency to learn. Children develop their capacities day by day. What influences in a native way our desire to learn? Rigid mentality. Once capable of self-evaluation, some children start to fear challenges. They start worrying they are not smart enough. According to them, smart people must always succeed. For children with a flexible mentality to be successful meand to surpass yourself, to become smarter.” (2017, pp. 29, 30).

1st-4th grades are very important for the development of personal values and of self esteem. It is very important that the positive messages transmitted to children during this period should not be connected to marks of any kind, because they are not the ones giving value to the child.

The teacher is the key to the good motivation of any pupil in class – he is responsible for involving the child in tasks as an integral part of the educational process, through self-discovery and curiosity. Curiosity is one of the most important triggers for motivation in learning. But this is not something new! The human being is attracted to the challenges of discovering new things. Teachers should insist on learning through discovery,

unpredictability, and development of critical thinking, reflection and self-reflection. I believe that this is the only way human thinking will achieve its purpose.

“If you do not try new things you may never find out what you are capable of.” Sir Ken Robinson (2014, p. 45).

Schoolbooks are full of information and pupils must memorize them in order to reproduce them. In the Romanian educational system the accent is still on memorization to the disadvantage of thinking. Learning must become our super-power and self-motivation is the secret of this action. “We must eliminate the idea that learning means passing some standardized tests and we must rebuild our approaches trying to support children’s ability to wonder, to imagine, to express themselves, to analyze to criticize and to doubt, to analyze like scientists.” Alex Beard (2019, p. 410).

Education must take care of children’s overall development and not just of their academic capacities. In the educational process we need a deep access to the self, the passion and not just to skills. Something that makes some people happy discourages other people. Activities that some people do easily, for others mean a lot of effort. When students are exposed to various and provocative learning experiences they will be helped to identify their resources, potential, skills and passion for certain activities.

The academic activity does not stand for intelligence as a whole. There is too much accent on the cognitive acquisitions and too little on social competencies and skills. If we ask a child to have only high marks in all subjects it means that we limit his development to the cognitive dimension only.

As part of the educational process I consider that teachers should focus on three dimensions: **emotional** (children should feel better about themselves, should have confidence, should know their resources, skills and explore their feelings, personal values and be given opportunities to express themselves and their imagination), **cognitive** (the methods through which children are helped to organize their information and learn) and **meta-cognitive** (reflection or self-reflection on one’s own learning experience). Durable and authentic learning is done only through reflection and self-reflection. Teachers should become “treasure hunters” because in every child there is a “treasure” that waits to be discovered.

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