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MOTIVATION AND SCHOOL LEARNING. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH ON "STEFAN VELOVAN" NATIONAL COLLEGE CRAIOVA

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Abstract

The "Motivation and School Learning" work addresses students' motivation and learning issues, which helps them understand the benefits of these two processes, so that the goals set by them are attained. The theme chosen by us is important in that it presents the forms of motivation and its influence on the teaching-learning process and the harmonious development of the student's personality. To be motivated is to act, to tend towards something, to do something. A student who feels no impulse or need to act is an unmotivated student, while a student who is activated or energized to act toward a goal is considered a motivated student. It is important for the pupil to show interest in school, to accomplish the school tasks and to meet the established goals. To be successful, teachers need to form a teaching-learning style that motivates students, centered on arguing their usefulness, enhancing existing skills and competences, and ensuring action. It is good for teachers to encourage students

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to take ambitious goals or to persuade them to accept the goals they propose, depending on the interests and skills identified.

Keywords: students, motivation, knowledge, teachers

1. Introduction

The theme "Motivation and School Learning" is an important topic in Romania because in most cases students claim that they are not motivated to learn because the benefits of school learning are not clearly explained and the methods adopted by the teachers for motivation are not convincing enough. That is why we want to emphasize the importance of a correct motivation from the point of view of school education. The motto of our research on this subject is represented by Anne Gottlier's words "It's so hard when you got to ... and so easy when you have a motivation."

The motivation for choosing this theme derives from our passion for becoming teachers and using the appropriate means to motivate students. At the same time, we want to emphasize that students need to be motivated and supported in what they do, both teachers and parents, in order to achieve the proposed objectives.

The research objectives are as follows:

• Identification and analysis of elements / factors related to the motivation for students learning;

• Description of the most frequent didactic and motivation strategies used by teachers in current practice;

• Identifying the reasons for learning;

• Underlining the importance of school activities in learning.

In order to achieve the objectives of this paper, a questionnaire was used as a research tool for quantitative research, targeting pupils of "Stefan Velovan" National College in Craiova.

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In the broad sense, learning is performing some activities in order to assimilate knowledge, skills, and abilities. The question is "how can students assimilate this knowledge?" Under these conditions, there are methods to motivate students to learn. The term "motivation" comes from the Latin "move" or "movere" = move, set in motion. It follows that motivation is any force, whatever its nature, which moves the body, the activity it carries out. The concept of motivation was launched in psychological literature in 1930 by E. Dichter, who considers that motivation is the real cause of human behavior. Motivation works at different levels: superficial and unconscious (stimulates and impulses) (Zimmerman, Bandura & Martinez-Pons, 1992; Zlate, 1994).

Learning also depends to a large extent on the goals that students propose, to reach where they want. Motivation is the key to success in this situation due to the fact that if the teacher motivates students to assimilate as much knowledge as they can, they may succeed in creating a career path to suit them. Thus, motivation is a totality of dynamic factors that determine the conduct of man (Savca, 2005).

External stimuli such as: the pupil learns due to the fear of punishment or because it is told to learn are not the best methods of motivation. Rather, these modalities should not be applied because they may have negative effects on the personality of the student. Instead, rewards have the strongest control effect, because the pressure to meet a request in order to receive a reward is evident (Popescu, 2015; Popescu et al., 2017).

Interests influence the learning outcomes by the fact that a child with learning interests will engage in such activity, while an uninterested one will escape from such activities by using various pretexts. Interests can be triggered, developed, modeled, but if the teacher has no tact in this respect, it is possible to suppress the interests even if the student had them initially. Therefore, teaching methods should be adapted to the interests of children.

When a student is in a learning-friendly psychic state, the student is attentive to the content, perceives more and more accurately. There may,

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however, be psychological conditions unfavorable to learning, which lead to a distorted perception of a thing, a phenomenon or a notion. The psychic state can be influenced by the student's attraction to the learning activity, the awakening of his interest, the student's engagement in the activity.

In other words, students can effectively avoid the failure to solve the task of learning by being careless and indifferent if they are seen as such by others. In this respect, the methods used by the teacher to stimulate the student to learn prove to be inefficient and useless.

2. Aspiration towards competence and the desire to become a good specialist

"What is school motivation or learning motivation?". The motivation for learning is made up of all the motives that, in their quality of internal circumstances of personality, determine, direct, organize and amplify the intensity of the learning effort. (Trust & Mardar, 2007; Teodorescu, 2017)

Thus, we can say that the student, as indeed any person, until he has not satisfied his or her primary need, such as the need for nourishment or security, cannot feel the necessity of self-realization or the need to learn (Voinea, Negrea & Teodorescu, 2016). From our experience as pupils, we can say that the environment in which the child develops, as is the case of those left in the care of their distant relatives and neighbors, as their parents work abroad, leaves a poignant mark on school learning.

The current concepts of motivation seem to be based on the premise that a motivational state is a special one, distinct, clearly differentiated from the other things that happen in the body. A correct theory of motivation should, on the contrary, assume that motivation is constant, infinite, fluctuating and complex, and that it is an almost universal feature of all the states that characterize the body (Maslow, 2007, p. 69).

The presence or absence of motivation influences the initiation, orientation and support of any psychic activity. For example, a student motivated for learning can be recognized by the following features: he is deeply involved

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in learning tasks, self-controlling through goals that he / she clearly sets, he / she adjusts his / her learning activity, has a great capacity for learning, has the tendency to constantly operate the transfer of what has been learned from one domain to another.

In the concrete existence of man, various forms of motivation are classified in opposite pairs. Thus, there would be positive motivation, produced by premature stimuli, for example: praise, encouragement, reward; versus negative motivation, caused by the use of aggressive stimuli, for example: threat, punishment, blame, and another pair would be intrinsic motivation versus extrinsic motivation (Buzdugan, 2006; Popescu et al., 2017).

It is therefore very important for teachers to instill a motivation for positive and intrinsic learning in their students, which will lead to school success and the determination of students to achieve their goals. The intrinsic motivation refers to those internal motives that are satisfied directly by performing the learning action (eg, the desire to know a certain thing, the personal curiosity etc.). The extrinsic motivation is generated by the desire to avoid a punishment, or the desire to get a reward from another person. Such reasons are met indirectly through learning activity, unlike the intrinsic motives, whose satisfaction is directly achieved through this activity.

In fact, learning is motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically. It has been found, however, that learning is much more productive when the child comes to learn from pleasure, from cognitive interest to a particular object of study, when it is intrinsically motivated. Some intrinsic motives have a primary character, being related to the basic needs of the human being, others have a secondary character, being derived from extrinsic motifs, by their internalization. For example, at young ages, the motivation for learning is predominantly extrinsic, as the child learns more from the desire to please his family or gain the teacher's sympathy (desire to belong), from meeting the requirements and obligations set by adults (the normative trend), or by the "ambition" of being a school prodigy. It is possible, however, over time that these extrinsic reasons lead

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to the "discovery" by the child of the interesting character of the object of study and this may contribute to the emergence of intrinsic motivation.

The strive for competence, the desire to become a good specialist can also contribute to the transformation of the initial extrinsic motivation into the intrinsic motivation of learning (Trandabăţ & Gîfu, 2017). The personal example of the teacher, the parents and other close persons, the mastery of the teacher in providing his or her lessons with an atmosphere of intellectual solicitation and in giving the pupils the sense of constant progress on the way of knowing a certain field can all constitute important pedagogical factors of transformation extrinsic motivation in intrinsic motivation of learning.

3. Motivational factor - predictor of success

In the long run, the motivation to achieve higher-level achievements tends to be associated with higher returns. Therefore, the motivational factor is considered a better predictor of success than the measurement of skills.

There are a significant number of environmental factors that teachers can use to increase student motivation.

1. Start the lesson by giving students a clear goal in order to be motivated
2. Explain their expectations clearly
3. Set short-term goals
4. Verbal and written assessments
5. Using familiar materials for examples
6. Minimize attractiveness of competitive motivation

At the age of preadolescence, the motivational value of the skills is, however, less well-known to students. The situation is explained by the fact that these attributes are not yet fully formed, as well as by their limited possibilities of self-knowledge. However, we included the category of special skills, because, especially when learning about the subjects they are interested in, some students motivate it by the presence of these attributes: "I am better at this subject"; "I have skills"; "I have talent"; "I learn with ease at some disciplines" etc.

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Included in this category of reasons are the students' answers that state "why" they learn without interest, with no pleasure in some objects: "I am not good at this subject"; "I am tone deaf"; "I have no talent in modern languages"; "I solve problems hard because I'm a slow thinker", etc.

The optimal motivation should not be understood only quantitatively, according to the criterion of energy intensity, but also qualitatively, according to the criterion of the value of the energizing factor (Frunză, 2018). Observations show that when they feel they lack sufficient knowledge to answer a question and their operational background is too undevelopped to solve a problematic situation successfully, pupils usually panic, become agitated and nervous. Limiting the orientation in the learning task to the perceptual model, to "attempts and errors", increases the share of subjective activism (affective). Cognitive uncertainty generates anxiety and affective tension. Too much mobilization in the direction of extrinsic emotional experiences makes students work impulsively, under pressure, in insecurity (Golu, 1987; Dramnescu & Enachescu, 2017; Roșca, 2017).

Learning, as the general property of the human psychic system, is an expression of the ability to self-organize and self-develop, based on hereditary potential and activity conditions. But as a psychic activity, it is a relationship between the body and the environment, in which energy consumption with an adaptive purpose takes place; a process that carries a certain human relationship with the world, according to specific needs; all manifestations of external or mental conduct that lead to adaptive results. However, learning is also an activity of assimilating or acquiring knowledge and intellectual operations needed for building up cognitive systems and operational structures.

There is an interdependence between psychic processes and learning (Negrea, 2015). On the one hand, the learning activity engages and involves all psychic processes and functions, such as perception, observation, imagery, and imagination as a whole, especially thought and memory, motivation and affectivity, and especially language, will and attention (Vlăduțescu, 2013; 2014;

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2019). On the other hand, learning, especially in its intensive forms, contributes to the modeling, structuring, and even the constitution of mental processes, as it not only enhances their content but also imposes the construction of new operative means, restructurings or special organizations within the whole human psychic system. Therefore, it is considered that learning is in some frameworks generative or formative and constructive.

Cognitive learning contributes and relies on the development of analysis and synthesis, abstraction and generalization, comparison and classification, algorithmics and heuristics, systematization and logical organization of thinking. The center of cognitive learning concerns the assimilated information-cognitive content. Therefore, programmatically, cognitive learning opposes superficiality and formalism. It is possible to learn something to reproduce orally or in writing through words without having understood the conceptual meanings correctly or without mastering the appropriate system of ideas.

4. Quantitative research on motivation and school learning

The study was carried out on a number of 50 pupils of the "Stefan Velovan" National Pedagogical College from Craiova.

The objectives of the research are: to identify methods that help pupils to be more motivated to learn; how motivated they are; emphasizing the importance of school activities in learning; identifying the reasons for learning.

After applying the questionnaire, we realized that 40% of the respondents are male and the remaining 60% are female. As far as their level is concerned, all those who responded are pupils in the 10th grade.

Starting from the desire to learn as much information as possible about the questioned students, I asked the following question: "How motivated / motivated are you for learning?". The recorded responses, as they appear in the appendix, are the following: 16% very much, 46% much, 30% less and 8% very little.

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To find ways to help students become more motivated, we have asked the following question: "What makes you more motivated?" The result was surprising. Thus, 60% considered it to be more motivated by attractive classes, 32% considered practical lessons, 2% class climate, 8% other.

In order to understand and identify the reasons why students learn, we have asked the following question: "What are the reasons for learning?" Starting from the premise that each student has different opinions and expectations, we have developed a number of variants, so the most representative answers were: 46% to get good grades, 38% because the curriculum is interesting, 22% to pass the tests, 12% the teacher's methods, 6% fear of the teacher.

Taking into account that school activities play a rather important role in shaping the pupil's personality and in the learning process, we have asked the following question: "How much does school activities help in learning?" The answers to this question were: 16% very much, 40% much, 28% little, 8% very little, 8% at all.

The question "Do you think the things taught in school will help you succeed in life?" had the objective of learning the students' opinions about the usefulness of things they learn in school for later in life. The following responses were recorded: 16% yes, 24% no, 30% maybe.

To find out the students' satisfaction with the teaching methods used by teachers, we asked the following question: "How satisfied are you with the teaching methods used by the teachers?" The answers were: 14% very dissatisfied, 22% dissatisfied, 42% satisfactory, 18% satisfied and 4% very satisfied (the degree of satisfaction with the teaching methods used by teachers in a college that prepares students to become teachers is quite low).

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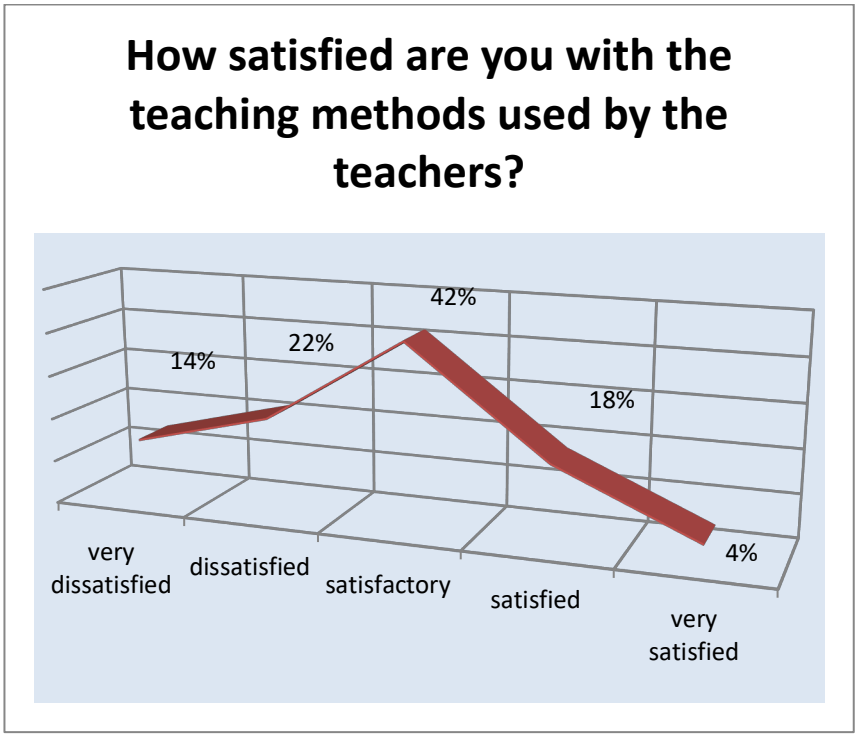

5. Conclusions

In order to create motivation, it is necessary to present to the pupils the purpose of learning, the fields of application of knowledge, to positively appreciate and encourage them to achieve their life goals, to show the progress they made, to awaken their curiosity about what they need to learn.

The teachers 'motivation for motivating school education is insufficient and teachers' pedagogical skills are more important than the amount of technical means available. The learning efficiency decreases when there is a minimum level of motivation or overmotivation and increases at an optimal level as an area between the minimum and the maximum. Knowing the real motives of student learning will enable teachers to intervene appropriately and timely to ensure student success in learning.

Also from our perspective, a motivated child who wants to learn, enjoys doing activities related to learning and believes that school and learning are

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important activities for his life. The role of motivation in school learning is very complex. Motivation explains not only the student's learning at one point but also its dynamics from one stage to the next. Motivation plays an important role in learning, as it leads to an increase in student efforts, a better concentration of attention, a faster workflow. Intensifying learning, it influences the memory capacity, in terms of the amount of information retained.

Motivation thus appears as the end product of multiple interactions. It is, first of all, a result of the student's own perceptions and expectations about the difficulty of the task and the ability to address it. Teachers will have to pay attention to the problems students have to clarify, not to minimize the problems that trouble them, to give them respect, and motivate them in order to achieve school success.

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