

# INITIAL MOTIVATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF APPLICABILITY TO THE CLASSROOM

Alexandrina Mihaela POPESCU<sup>1</sup>, Elena-Loredana GHITĂ<sup>2</sup>,  
Alexandru-Ioan CIOCÎRLAN-ȘERBAN<sup>3</sup>

## **Abstract**

”The researcher is always at the beginning of the endless path of knowledge” (Ciolan, 2008, our translation). *The modern concept of human knowledge in all its manifestations is heavily centred on the model of natural and social science, in which the essential elements of the investigation are the formulation of a hypothesis, the assumption of an objective, independent reality, and the testing of the theory. Thus, among psychological processes and mechanisms defining the human being, motivation plays a particularly important role in knowing and understanding as accurately as possible the nature of man, his determination in performing the work tasks, namely by analyzing the students and their degree of selective sensitization and impetus, falling within the general category of motivation. This being said, the present paper aims to capture the ways to motivate motivation along with its types, especially the intrinsic, its "spring" and its applicability to the classroom.*

**Keywords:** motivation; knowledge; ideals; concepts; self; students.

## **1. Introduction**

Motivation is the set of internal stimuli that determines the behaviour as well as the body of necessities of the body that guides and directs the behaviour towards their satisfaction (Zlate, 2005). Motivation is the psychic mechanism with the ability to allow action, independent of external factors. It is an internal cause, an activating and predisposing psychic structure, with self-determination roles by internal stimulation. Essential to motivation is that it in still's, impulses, triggers the desire for action, and action through the reverse link influences the very motivational basis and it's dynamics.

In other words, motivational action is an important lever in the process of self-regulation of the individual, a driving force of the entire psychic and human development. Motivation through its propulsive and tense character raises and recovers, sedates and amplifies the material of the mental construction of the individual.

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<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, PhD, University of Craiova, Teacher Training Department, Romania, email address alexia\_popescu@yahoo.com, corresponding author.

<sup>2</sup> Student, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Craiova, Romania.

<sup>3</sup> Student, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Craiova, Romania.

## 2. The body of work

Motivation is an umbrella term covering an extremely wide sphere, framing different types, the most common being: needs, motives, interests, beliefs, ideals, conception of the world and life.

The needs are basic and fundamental motivational structures of the personality, its most powerful driving forces reflecting, most importantly, the biopsychosocial balance of man under the conditions of the external environment. Depending on their genesis and content, they can be classified into: primary, secondary, biological or organic, physiological or functional, material, spiritual and social needs (Zlate, 2005).

**Reasons** are the updating and the subjective plan of the states of necessity.

**Interests** are selective, relatively stable and active guidelines towards certain areas of activity.

**Beliefs** are ideas deeply rooted in the personality structure, powerful emotions pushing, urging to action.

**Ideals** are projections of the individual into systems of images and ideas that guide their entire existence.

*The philosophy of life or the conception of the world* is the most complex, comprehensive, general of the motivational structures. Life philosophy has a motivational role as it includes needs, needs, aspirations, interests and ideals. We also find here a cognitive component because it provides the subject with the information about society and existence, but also a value side because we encounter here personal attitudes and beliefs.

The concept of world and life is a cognitive-value motivational formation of maximum generality, comprising the set of opinions, ideas, theories about man, nature, societies.

**Intrinsic motivation** - if the generating source is in the subject, in their personal needs, if it is in tune with the work done by the subject, then we are talking about the existence of direct or intrinsic motivation. The specificity of this form of motivation consists in its satisfaction by itself, carrying out its proper action. When someone walks for the pleasure of walking, reads a book because they care, plays tennis because s/he is attracted to this action, learns from the need to keep up with the need for orientation and investigation, then we say s/he is animated by intrinsic motivation. It determines the individual to participate in an activity for the pleasure and satisfaction that they derive without being constrained by external factors. Some authors speak in this case of motivation stemming from the attractiveness of the pursued goal (Winnefeld). The basic form of intrinsic motivation is curiosity and, in particular, epistemic curiosity, expressing the need to know, enlarge and expand the horizon of knowledge. The intrinsically motivated learning activity is supported by an inner need for knowledge, passion for a certain field, and the pleasure of learning. It is achieved with a relatively low mobilization effort, it induces feelings of satisfaction, fulfillment and leads to a lasting assimilation of knowledge.

Abraham Maslow (1997) developed a personality theory of the human being that had a particular influence in several areas. This wide influence is partly due to

the high practical level of his theory. Many people find it easy to understand what Maslow says. They can recognize in his pyramid some characteristics of their experience or behaviour. They find that they are real and identifiable, but they have never had the problem in that way before. The Maslow Necessity Hierarchy has five levels.

Maslow hierarchies human needs according to their priority in five categories (Maslow, 2000):

- Physiological needs;
- Safety and security needs;
- Social needs;
- The need for esteem;
- The need for self-reliance;

*Physiological needs*, that is, those necessities that each strikes in an inherent and constant manner due to human nature, and which are specific to preserving continued existence. These needs to eat, drink, breathe, sleep, wash, etc., are found in a primary and priority manner in all societies and cultures, with a greater concentration of those for whom this level is dominant in Third World Countries, for example. Examples of services or products that address this type of need: housing, food, air conditioning, beds, chairs, thermal power stations, stoves, showers, sinks, contraceptives, clothing.

*Security / safety / security needs* that are circumscribed to social norms and civilization in order to have the resources needed to continue an activity as to the role an individual performs functionally in a society. These needs include the security that comes from the financial / material situation, the security of an environment that preserves health, and prevents physical illness or injury, the security of a family environment, the assurance of property, resources of various types and morality as a psychosocial component of the environment of which the individual belongs. Once physiological needs are secured, security is the first thing that individuals will focus on, according to this model. Examples of services or products that fall in this category of needs: insurance, credit, weapons, dating services, security and security services.

*Social needs*, community affiliation, communication, psychological approximation of other peers, family for the purpose of soul and sexual intimacy, need for affection. In this respect, an interesting sociological phenomenon correlated with the economic development of the countries, with the insistence on satisfying the first two levels, is that of depression and suicide rate. At the level of different societies and cultures, for example, a different spread of this problem has been found, as it is found that in those countries / cultures in which the social activity is spurred, the sociological phenomenon of depression is emphasized. Examples of services or products addressing this category of needs: public places, social / networking events, virtual communities, forums.

*Needs of self-esteem*, self-image, trust, respect, either unconditionally, or built and / or recognized / conferred by others on the basis of achievements that are accepted and socially valued in the environment in which the individual is working.

Research shows that high self-esteem leads to happiness, and self-acceptance leads to the stability of self-esteem. Examples of services or products addressing this type of need: psychological counseling, personalized clothing, accessories, media broadcasts / productions.

*Needs of self-development*, growth, fulfillment, happiness, overcoming, psychological evolution, attainment of certain standards / objectives that ensure the differentiation, uniqueness and superiority of the individual with respect to others. Examples of services or products that address this category of needs: coaching, mentoring, psychological counseling, creative camps, personal development programmes.

*The level of applicability of intrinsic motivation within the classroom* is a very important topic because a social group (like a class or a school group) needs the manifestation of a desire from inside. When it is stated that students learn more when they work harder, the truism seems very clearly formulated.

If we ask students what makes them make efforts to learn, the answers we receive are usually very varied. They learn, for example, to get a professional qualification, to succeed in life, to get good grades, to learn new interesting content driven by the ambition to overcome others, to receive praise from teachers and parents, or to avoid conflicting situations. Educational practice indicates that, as a rule, the learning activity is multi-motivated, supported by a set of reasons and not by itself. However, some reasons prevail, and we can see that some students learn first and foremost to get good grades and to be at the top of the class, while others learn because they are interested in a certain subject and want to find out how much many in the field. Good students usually indicate other reasons than weak learners. While good students discuss about the desire to know as much as possible, about the desire for professional visibility, about prestige, weak students discuss about the fear of failure, the desire to get satisfactory grades to pass, or to avoid conflicts with parents. An analysis of the different categories of reasons directly related to school performance gives us D. Ausubel and F. Robinson (1981, pp. 417-418). According to them, the motivation of achievements in the school environment would have three components: the cognitive impulse, the need for strong assertion of the self, the need for affiliation.

*The cognitive impulse* is centered on the need to know and understand, to master knowledge, to formulate and solve problems. It is fully oriented towards the didactic task and it is satisfied by fulfilling the task. The need for a strong assertion of the ego is aimed at achieving a high school return, as these achievements provide a certain prestige, a certain position within the school group. Approval from teachers satisfies the need to assert the self as a component of the motivation of school activity. Research on school motivation has shown that exaggeration of motivation focused on self-assertion generates anxiety. It is manifested by fearing a possible failure that would lead to the loss of the ranking and prestige gained through work. Also, the same excess can lead to deeply unrealistic school and professional aspirations, which are later followed by either failures and the collapse of self-esteem or neglect of didactic tasks (when these aspirations are unrealistically low). The need

for affiliation is aimed at achievements that will provide the individual with the approval of some people (parents, teachers) or a group with whom s/he identifies, in the sense of dependence on them. D. Ausubel and F. Robinson draw attention to the fact that all the three components of the motivation of school activity can come into play at any moment in the student concrete behaviour. However, the strength of these components of motivation also varies with age. The need for affiliation is more pronounced during early schooling, when children strive to achieve good results in learning to please their parents and educators and not lose their approval. During puberty and adolescence, the need for affiliation decreases in intensity and, at the same time, it is re-oriented from parents to peers. The need for strong assertion of the ego is the dominant component of the motivation of school activity in adolescence and is maintained during the professional activity. Cognitive impulse is, potentially, the most important type of motivation for learning. It has been linked to the innate tendencies of man to curiosity, to discover as many things as possible. Maintaining this momentum and developing it during schooling depends on the teacher's mastery and it is an important factor.

The fact that motivation is a basic component of the learning process is taken for granted, and it becomes evidence. Learning is so substantial when it is followed by a satisfying state of affairs, certainly pleasing the learner. The classical elements of motivation in the classroom are those of intrinsic or extrinsic categories. In what follows, we shall indicate the main "self-stimulation" strategies of a child in the classroom (Iucu, 2001).

1. Children should be taught to use the inner language to re-size their motivation (for example repeating phrases such as "I will do better next time").

2. Children can and should be taught to change their representations of their own style and methods of learning, by applying them to generally valid principles, but also to what has been called the "man himself" style.

3. Children can and must be taught to make known and publicly argue their views. Hourly open discussions allow the teacher to observe the way students think and share it in the classroom. This allows the teacher to know the student's behaviour and their way of thinking, from a socio-interactive and motivational point of view.

4. Children can and must learn strategies involving collaboration and active participation. Through their increased participation in educational decisions, students can develop their own motivation and gain an effective social networking exercise. Mutual learning often requires courage from teachers to accept and be able to change roles with students when the situation allows, by asking them to empathize with each other's way of thinking.

5. Children can and should be taught to ask questions about what they read and summarize some paragraphs. Studies have shown that this metagogical strategy can have positive effects the student's understanding ability and on their cognitive motivation.

All five advanced teacher suggestions present a very effective operational system available to school managers to optimize both the level of motivation of students in the classroom and some intellectual, punctual skills that accompany these objectives (Zimmerman, Bandura, Martinez-Ponce, 1992).

In a very broad sense, the term *performance* denotes the observable learning outcomes. For socio-cognitive approaches to learning, the term performance refers to behaviours that translate students' use of declarative knowledge or procedural knowledge into different learning situations. Performance plays an important role in motivational dynamics. It is also a consequence of motivation, because the more motivated a student is, the better his performance. A motivated student will persevere more, use appropriate learning strategies that will influence his / her performance. The relationship between motivation and performance should not be considered unilaterally, because performance can also influence motivation. Performance, as a concrete result of the learning activity, becomes a student's source of information that influences his or her perceptions of one's own competence. The effect of performance on the student's self perceptions may be positive or negative. If a student succeeds in a learning task that s/he has cognitively engaged in and persevered in solving it, s/he will estimate that performance was worth it. This will improve the learner's opinion of his or her own activity and make it more valuable to that type of activity, at the same time, a failure can have a negative effect on the learner's perceptions of his / her own competence, causing him/her to question his / her possibilities of success in the activities the teacher proposes. A repeated failure can lead the student to the phenomenon of learned helplessness, the effects of which we have already discussed. Performance is, therefore, not just a demonstration of what the student has learned, but is also an event through which he is judged, evaluated, valued as a person (Sălăvăstru, 2004).

The aspiration level can be defined as the standard an individual hopes and expects to achieve in a task. This explains why, for example, a student who is awarded grade 7 in an assessment, lists this as a success, and another, who is awarded the same grade, has reported a failure. We always strive for the aspiration level. Both success and failure influence the level of aspiration. Repeated success increases the person's aspiration level as repeated failure decreases. There may be students who always work under their capabilities because of lacks motivation. The worst thing from the point of view of vicious motivation is the non-involvement of students in classroom interactions. The teacher should be very aware of the motivation to improve students' intellectual performance, but not to neglect social performance, given the role and status of the student in the classroom. The management of the class of students is constantly concerned with improving the functionality of the forms and motivational structures, through the relevant interventions of the teaching staff.

In order to solve the problem of a lack of motivation, the teacher must have correct information about the students' level and take into account all the causes that may lead to lack / refusal of motivation. The teacher has to set a standard success model to discuss with the student concerned, fuelling him/her with the intended level of attainment. The teacher must be calm and support the effort of those concerned.

Motivation is an essential condition for the student success. The following problem arises: how strong should motivation be to achieve higher performance in fulfilling school tasks? Research has shown that both too intense motivation (over-motivation) and too low motivation (under-motivation) in an activity can lead to poor

results or even failure. Over-stimulation leads to maximum energy mobilization and emotional tension that can result in psychic blockage, stress, disorganization of the conduct, and ultimately failure. Sub-motivation leads to insufficient energy mobilization, superficial treatment of tasks, and ultimately the result is the failure to achieve the proposed goal. Under the circumstances, the question of the optimal level of motivation that leads the student towards achieving high performance in the learning activity is raised. The answer is found in the law of motivational optimum, also known as the Yerkes-Dodson law, according to which the increase in performance is proportional to the increase of motivation only to a point beyond which stagnation and even regression occur. The moment when the decline begins depends on the complexity and difficulty of the pregnancy. In the case of simple, routine tasks, the critical area of motivation occurs at a higher level, while in the case of complex tasks the critical area is at a lower level (Sălăvăstru, 2004).

Initially, a child's motivation for school represents a combination of external and internal factors, supported by his/her multilayered knowledge of school and schooling. It is known that learning is a tedious task. The question is, "what factors can prevent its transformation into an apathetic, tiring occupation?"

At pre-school age, the child explores phenomena affectionately, tends to know them, and as a schoolteacher, it rarely happens to get aversion to the activity that gives him/her pleasure. Therefore, the excessive use by the adult of the means of external motivation - with the emotional effects of fear of punishment or negative situations, expecting reward - can lead to negative effects.

Particularly important for the development of school motivation is the dynamics of the processes of appreciation and self-appreciation. During the school year several stages of evolution of these processes can be identified. In a first stage, which corresponds to the first grade, we have to deal with a vague, diffused attitude of the child towards the teacher's appreciation: the child is interested in getting as much appreciation, even grades, relatively independent of the level of appreciation. Subsequently, starting with the third grade, appreciation is based on the level of appreciation: the desire to receive not just grades, but even higher grades (Golu, Zlate, Verza, 1994).

The learning activity can be supported not only by external motivation, but also by internal motivation, which activates the process of assimilation of knowledge on a permanent basis. It appears when the educator ensures the stimulation and maintenance of a permanent active state of the child's cognitive liveliness and cognitive curiosity. Between 6-10 years old, the need to explore, inform and document the child is in full swing. S/he wishes to learn more about facts and events that s/he does not directly attend, being stimulated in this respect by the media network. S/he proves to be a passionate collector, a great amateur of technology consumption, showing interest in a large variety of technology and industrial products. At the same time, the young learner can show strong inclinations towards music, storytelling, poetry.

The educator must make use of this "openness" of the young learner's personality to the need to learn, to know, to cultivate his/her attachment to school and learning, love of and interest in knowledge.

The broader reasons (social reasons) of the young learner's conduct are closely related not only to the learning activity but also to how they are organized and how they interact with others. It is important that they are based on the activism of children, their independence and their creative initiative.

### **3. Conclusions and recommendations**

Based on the presented information, we can conclude that motivation is a bridge to both the knowledge of the individual viewed from the perspective of the psyche, as well as towards the "developing man". This second perspective, we intended to focus on, thus highlighting that the motivational emphasis should be put at an early age to develop a strong personality with clearly established goals. Poor and unmotivated students are generally estimated to be less responsible for their failures or successes, attributing failures to lack of skills, and success to chance. The teacher must persuade them that through sustained efforts they can succeed. S/he can also argue that much of the good student's success is due to effort. Educational practice has demonstrated that teachers communicate little with weak and unmotivated students, are content with their incomplete answers during the lesson, are tempted to criticize them frequently and show contempt for them when they fail. In the face of such behaviours, students perceived as weak and unmotivated do not make any effort to learn because they know that teachers involve them very rarely, and that they only address them when making remarks. Then they enter a vicious circle: they are not encouraged to work, the students are not motivated, and do not work, abandon learning, thus confirming the teacher's opinion that good results cannot be achieved with these students.

Controlling and directing the motivational system specific to learning activities is one of the most difficult tasks of the teacher's work. In spite of the extensive theoretizations, the stimulation of the student's motivation remains an art, which is related to the teacher's mastery and gratitude. In particular, intrinsic motivation must be cultivated and discovered in the students because it aims to provide an impulse and exploits the desire for success and the necessary school and social evolution in achieving the highest and highest applicability of the educational ideal through the "free, integral and harmonious development of human individuality, the development of the autonomous personality and the adoption of a system of values that are necessary for personal fulfillment and development, for the development of entrepreneurship, for active citizenship, for social inclusion *and for insertion to the labour market* " (Law of National Education 1/2011, Art.2 (3), our translation).

The level of teacher's competence as well as his / her level of involvement in teaching, enthusiasm, the passion with which he / she makes his / her job deeply



influences the motivational dynamics of the students. The lack of motivation of the teacher is a problem as serious as his/her incompetence. There are teachers who do not show any interest in their profession. Although the social and economic context can explain this phenomenon, it is no less serious that the lack of motivation of the teacher may be at the origin of the student's lack of motivation. We know it sounds like a slogan, but it is true that a bored teacher cannot be a source of inspiration and motivation for his/her students. If you want to motivate someone, you have to be motivated yourself. Also, the teacher has to focus his/her attention on pre-learning activities. For a long time the essential activity of the students in the classroom consisted of listening passively to the information delivered by the teacher. A truly motivating teaching activity must, however, involve students actively and get their interest. The teacher should be able to stimulate students' curiosity through novel elements, by creating cognitive conflicts, by using case studies or by engaging students in team work.

How the teacher carries out the assessment can also have effects on student motivation. For many teachers, assessment is just awarding students grades, classifying them, and seeing whether they have succeeded or not. This conception may have negative effects on the motivation of some students because it creates anxiety. If we want the assessment to be truly motivating for students, in order to make them more involved in learning and persevere, it is necessary for the evaluation to focus more on students' progress, recognizing the effort undertaken for improving their own performance, rather than assessing the level of knowledge. Students' development should be assessed in positive terms (praise, encouragement), because disapproval is less effective in stimulating learning motivation. Let us also remind ourselves that rewards and punishments do not have the same effect on the motivation of learning.

Students should be helped to become familiar with the teacher's evaluation tools and actually use them, overcoming the stages of simple exercises of self-control and self-reliance. In addition to these general strategies aimed at changing pedagogical practices, the teacher can ask himself/herself how to act directly on a student's motivation. For this purpose, it is necessary to achieve a motivational profile of the pupil, by assessing his / her interests, the interest in or rejections of a particular subject, the prospects for the future that s/he has outlined, the value s/he attaches to the activity of learning. The learner's motivational profile must also include perceptions of the competence and the degree of control s/he feels to have in fulfilling the different learning tasks.

Thus, if a student has intrinsically well-defined motivational sources and his / her successful learning experiences reach high levels, the most difficult and difficult task is for the teacher, who must seek, know and develop this internal drive.

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