

CZU: 374.7.015.3

[https://doi.org/10.59295/sum9\(176\)2024_28](https://doi.org/10.59295/sum9(176)2024_28)

DEFINING ASPECTS OF ADULT MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF LIFELONG LEARNING

*Dionisie COTRUȚA,**Universitatea de Stat din Moldova*

Motivation has been considered from the perspective of psychodynamic orientation as a stimulation and discharge of energy; associated from the behaviourist approach to a stimulus, as a learned reaction; seen as a psychological factor influencing behaviour. Motivation as an influencing factor in lifelong learning tendencies and as a landmark in the lifelong learning process is gaining momentum in today's society, becoming increasingly common among both researchers and educational institutions.

While the education of school pupils has long been the main focus of educational institutions, the importance of adult education is now becoming increasingly apparent. It is widely recognized that adult education plays a crucial role in promoting a prosperous society. Consequently, the relevance of adult education and the factors that motivate adults to learn are increasingly important.

Keywords: *motivation, adult motivation, adult motivation, adult motivation for learning, learning.*

ASPECTE DEFINITORII ALE MOTIVAȚIEI ADULȚILOR PENTRU ÎNVĂȚARE ÎN CONTEXTUL ÎNVĂȚĂRII PE TOT PĂRCURSUȘUL VIEȚII

Motivația a fost considerată din perspectiva orientării psihodinamice ca o stimulare și descărcare de energie; asociată prin prisma abordării behavioriste unui stimul, ca o reacție învățată; văzută ca un factor psihologic ce influențează comportamentul. Motivația ca factor de influență în tendințele învățării pe tot parcursul vieții fiind un punct de reper în procesul de formare continuă capătă amploare în societatea actuală, devenind tot mai des întâlnit în rândul atât a cercetătorilor cât și a instituțiilor de învățământ.

În timp ce educația elevilor a fost mult timp obiectivul principal al instituțiilor de învățământ, importanța educației adulților devine acum tot mai evidentă. Este larg recunoscut faptul că educația adulților joacă un rol crucial în promovarea unei societăți prospere. În consecință, relevanța educației adulților și factorii care îi motivează pe adulți să învețe sunt tot mai importante.

Cuvinte-cheie: *motivație, motivația adultului, motivația adulților pentru învățare, învățare.*

Introduction

Motivation has been considered from the perspective of psychodynamic orientation as a stimulation and discharge of energy; associated from the behaviourist approach to a stimulus, as a learned reaction; seen as a psychological factor influencing behaviour; interpreted as a spontaneous activity that energizes the organism and explains the transition from a state of rest to a state of action. Motivation has been studied within the Darwinian model of adaptation, the homeostasis model, the physical model of energy discharge promulgated by Freud, cognitive models that substitute motivation for cognitive anticipation processes (human behaviours being determined by expected outcomes).

Basic content

Golu M. mentions in his book „Fundamentele psihologiei” that motivation „appears as an external causality transposed internally: if the object corresponding to the satisfaction of a need is missing and, therefore, has no way to trigger the corresponding behaviour, its place is taken by the state of need in relation to it, spontaneously actualized, following physiological or psychological changes [1].

Sillamy, in turn, considers motivation to be „the assembly of dynamic factors that determine an individual's conduct, or the totality of the internal motives of conduct, whether innate or acquired, conscious or unconscious, simple physiological urges or abstract ideals” [2].

Motivation plays a crucial role in supporting and promoting learning. However, it is essential to understand that motivation can be positive or negative. Negative incentives, such as exploiting the fear of failure, can have long-term effects on motivation due to their association with stress and prevention of negative outcomes. This is true for both children and adults, where negative stimuli should be avoided to promote effective learning. In addition, it is important to recognize that not all types of motivation work for everyone. Different people respond to different motivations. By understanding what motivates us, we can train our thinking to be more productive.

Motivation can be conceptualized as encompassing three key dimensions: direction, intensity and persistence.

1. The direction of motivation refers to the individual's achievement of a specific goal. In general, it is of interest how individuals approach a task, whether or not the task is ultimately accomplished. Some individuals may inadvertently direct their efforts, expending energy without achieving the desired results. Conversely, some individuals may direct their energy in exactly the desired direction with minimal effort.

2. The term 'motivational intensity' is used to describe the level of effort that an individual is willing to exert to achieve a particular goal. Some goals require a lower level of motivation, while others require more effort.

3. The term 'persistence' is used to describe the duration of motivation. Some individuals are capable of self-motivation for relatively short periods, while others can maintain motivation for long periods.

The studies on the topic of motivation are involving understanding individual needs and interests. Needs, which are biologically determined, play a major role in determining behaviour, according to authors such as A. Maslow. Interests, on the other hand, are more refined and represent specific orientations towards areas of knowledge. Interests, on the other hand, have a strong emotional component and greatly influence human activity and knowledge acquisition. For example, an interest in a discipline may be driven by curiosity and a desire for theoretical knowledge. Alternatively, when emotions are more involved, there may even be a desire to pursue a particular profession related to the expressed interests. In summary, *needs* and *interests* are key components in understanding motivation, with needs being the main determinants of behaviour and interests shaping the direction of human activity and knowledge acquisition.

Motivation for learning is a vital aspect of human motivation and encompasses the factors that motivate individuals to engage in learning. In the context of education, motivation can be viewed in three different ways. First, it acts as a catalyst or influencing factor that pushes learners towards the act of learning. Secondly, motivation serves as a means of engagement and support during the learning process. Finally, it can also be seen as an outcome or product of learning, reflecting a state of harmony with educational goals. These different dimensions of motivation interact and create a dynamic process of motivating learning. Motivation facilitates learning by helping learners to focus their attention and achieve a state of intellectual readiness, as well as to sustain their energy and maintain an optimal level of activation for effective learning. In addition, motivation may also be influenced by the act of learning itself, emphasizing the importance of understanding the effects and outcomes of learning in inspiring further learning. This dual role of motivation underlines the need for teachers to be aware of the diversity of motivational factors at play in learners' activities.

In 1954, the American psychologist Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) developed a theory that equated motivation with needs. Maslow's theory, which he called the hierarchy of needs, is based on the premise that human motivation is determined by a hierarchy of needs, with lower-level needs being the primary motivators. The fundamental premise of this theory is that every human being progresses along a motivational ladder as he or she satisfies needs, from the lowest to the highest level. The hierarchy is described as follows:

1. The primary objective is to meet the physiological needs of the human organism, including the basic requirements for food, shelter and warmth.

2. Security needs (the need to have a family, a home).

3. Emotional and social needs related to belonging to various social groups and maintaining social relationships with people.

4. The need for social esteem and recognition, which is satisfied by acquiring skills and obtaining a certain social position.

5. Intellectual, knowledge and understanding needs, which arise as a result of satisfying the esteem of others;

6. Aesthetic needs, which concern the need for beauty and order;

7. Needs for self-actualization and personal achievement, the individual potential, the last level of Maslow's hierarchy, the last level of the ladder, the one most people reach.

Maslow's theory postulates an order of satisfaction of these needs, according to which the individual will act to satisfy physiological needs before seeking security, security needs before affective and belonging needs, and so on. In addition, the higher a need is in the pyramid, the more specific it is to human nature and the greater the fulfilment derived from its satisfaction. However, it should be noted that not all individuals are able to satisfy their intellectual needs or needs for fulfilment and self-actualization.

According to this theory, we can assume that the trainer must ensure that higher-order needs are not activated at the expense of the trainees' basic needs and desires, including those related to intellectual and cognitive development, performance and emotional well-being. These basic needs and wants, which are essential for optimal functioning, include physical comfort, physical security and emotional needs such as love, appreciation and high self-esteem. The learning environment should be characterized by a feeling of friendship and mutual respect, free from any intimidation or undue pressure. In addition, the trainer can help the trainee to develop confidence in his or her own abilities, thus promoting high self-esteem.

Motivation in adult learning

The concept of lifelong learning is based on the notion of a synthetic model for motivating adults to engage in learning activities. This model is developed based on a synthesis of the general principles of learning, the distinctive physiological and psychosocial characteristics of the adult, social requirements and managerial perspectives on work.

The learning process is a lifelong effort that takes place throughout an individual's life. It involves interacting with the environment and assimilating knowledge from it. Learning comes naturally to humans; the desire to explore and assimilate new information is a fundamental aspect of human nature. One of the most recent leading theories in motivation studies, self-determination theory, is based on the assumption that the inclination to be curious about the environment and to be interested in learning and expanding one's knowledge are intrinsic characteristics of human nature. However, in most learning contexts, particularly those involving groups, external control mechanisms are introduced which have the potential to undermine the psychological processes involved in deep and quality learning. Findings from numerous studies support the idea that circumstances that favour individuals' experiences of autonomy, competence (performance), and interpersonal relationships lead to the highest levels of motivation and sustained engagement in learning, including self-directed learning, academic performance improvement efforts, sustained learning, creativity, and well-being.

The learning process in adulthood reflects a situation of restructuring and reorganization, its motivation being much more complex than that of the schoolchild. This process leads to a continuous transformation of ideas, accumulation of new knowledge, independence in the process of structured, logic-based thinking.

The adult has well-formed psychological processes and makes more complex emotional associations with facts, assumes responsibility for the quality of knowledge acquisition and knows exactly what he/she wants to learn or know. It is motivated by intrinsic needs or desires. In general, the adult learner participates in training programs because he or she wants or needs the information content in order to do his or her job or to develop personally.

Adult learning is defined as a process that is:

- directed by the adult learner;
- responsive to newly identified needs;
- participatory;
- experiential;
- reflective;
- provides feedback.

Effective adult learning processes are characterized by

- individualization of the learning process;
- a psychological climate of mutual trust;
- expression of points of view;
- associating new knowledge with previous experiences;
- sharing experiences.

Adult learning is often perceived as a painful and challenging experience, both mentally and physically. Many adults resist learning because of the difficulties and changes involved. However, it is beneficial to place adults in supportive learning groups where they can collaborate and work at their own pace. This approach allows them to gain confidence in their abilities and develop an appetite for learning. The key to understanding how adults learn is to consider their roles, tasks and circumstances. Viviane de Landsheere suggests combining work and learning to create a unified approach. Adults should take responsibility for their own learning and be willing to plan and extend their knowledge. They should also be able to overcome obstacles, assess their skills and strive to progress. By creating a stimulating learning environment, adults can successfully engage in research and discovery.

A survey of 12,000 subjects in different countries, conducted by Boshier and Collins in 1983, led to the identification of six motivating factors for lifelong learning:

1. The need to establish new social contacts, to enter into relationships with others, to secure favourable status, to shine socially.
2. The desire to progress professionally.
3. The aspiration to escape from routine, to exchange ideas, to have fun, to enter interesting occupations.
4. Eagerness to increase one's qualifications, to perform useful activities for the community.
5. The desire to respond favourably to social expectations formulated by hierarchical superiors, counselors, friends, professional associations.
6. Personal interest, curiosity, the need to broaden spiritual horizons.

In his paper „Cum învață adulții”, Kidd [3] states that adult learning is a „struggle”, emphasizing the active role of the individual in the learning process. Rather than passively receiving knowledge or skills, the adult learner actively seeks, discovers, establishes, and acquires these skills. They are driven by the desire to achieve a specific outcome, which they pursue through a process of action and acquisition. The above verbs indicate an active approach to learning. Consequently, adult learning cannot be defined as the mere accumulation of knowledge; rather, it involves a process of reorganizing or restructuring (in some cases, just reorganizing) existing knowledge.

Conclusions

Thus, we can **conclude** that motivation is a complex force that affects human behaviour, especially in learning. It has dimensions like direction, intensity, and persistence, which are influenced by individual needs and interests. Maslow's hierarchy of needs shows that motivation evolves as basic needs are fulfilled, leading to higher-level needs. Understanding the factors behind motivation is crucial for creating effective learning environments. For adults, motivation to learn is often intrinsic, driven by personal development goals and practical needs. Adult learning differs from children's learning, as adults are more independent and self-directed, with a deeper emotional connection to the material. Adults approach learning with a clear purpose, balancing personal, professional, and social demands. However, if lower-level needs are not met, motivation can be hindered. Therefore, it is important to create supportive and emotionally safe learning environments that address the full range of needs.

References:

1. GOLU, Mihai. *Fundamentele psihologiei*. București: Editura România de mâine, 2000. ISBN: 973-582-519-8.
2. SILLAMY N. Larousse. *Dicționar de psihologie*. București: Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 1998. ISBN: 973-9243-25-8.
3. KIDD, J., *Cum învață adulții*. – București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1981.

4. ZLATE, M. *Fundamentele psihologiei*. București: Ed. Pro Humanitate, 2000. 332 p. ISBN 973-99024-0-5.
5. NEGOVAN, V. *Introducere în psihologia educației*. București: Editura Universitară, 2008, ISBN: 978-973-749-099-5.

About the author:

Dionisie COTRUȚA, PhD student at the Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Sociology and Social Work, State University of Moldova.

E-mail: cotruta.dionisie@gmail.com

ORCID-ID: 0009-0009-3734-3692

Presented on 30.09.2024