Motivation in Students' Professional Options

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Abstract

The present paper is based on the theoretical assumption according to which motivation is the factor that triggers, energizes and directs any individual in his activity. The particular complexity of the concept results from the fact that man does not act under the influence of a single reason but under the influence of a motivational constellation where as a rule, hierarchies are settled and internal conflicts are overcame.

Discerning between the learning motivation and the professional motivation we have considered that the motives develop and organize according to the information they have about the profession they prepare for.

We elaborated a scale of dominants and categories of motivational factors based on a questionnaire which function differently, while offering information about the intensity and the value of professional options.

Keywords:
Reasons, professional options, system of values.

Introduction

The professional development of a person is the result of a multitude of determinant or favourable factors. The identification of the motivational factors which underlie professional behaviours and which determine both the specific capacity of a profession and professional satisfactions are essential.

The study of motivation reflected in a great diversity of definitions materialized in the elaboration of theoretical models which constitute an applicable frame and a reference point extremely useful for a concrete operation.

A. Maslow admits the existence of five categories of needs organized hierarchicaly: *physiological, safety, social, self-esteem and self-actualization needs*, while C.P. Alderfer does not develop the same strict hierarchy as in

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Maslow's theory, but compressed the needs in three large classes: *existence, relatedness and growth needs.* (Maslow, 2008).

D. McClelland identifies three needs which manifest in close connection to the workplace (*achievement, affiliation* and *power needs*), while V. H. Vroom affirms, according to *expectancy theory*, that rationally, people rather choose behaviours that they estimate to be most appropriate to attain their purposes, according to the effort applied, utility and the perceived value of the respective behaviour. Unless Vroom's model, analyzed from the rational and individual choice of behaviours, the behaviourist model situates in the perspective of the behavioural control through the manipulation of its associated consequences. S. Adams, starting from the principle of cognitive dissonance, proposes the *equity theory*, according to which in case of an inequity at the workplace, the individual will perceive a disbalance and will be motivated to take action in order to seek to maintain equity. F. Herzberg detects the existence of a discontinuity between the factors which determine job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction, the *two-factor theory* observing that job satisfaction is determined only by a certain type of factors (motivators), and dissatisfaction is produced by another type (hygiene). These are only a few among the most important „clasical" theories of motivation, included among other examples (Constantin, 2004).

Motivation represents the internal, subjective drive which confers selectivity and activism to the psychic, initiating a certain type of behaviour. By reason of motivation in work and other domains, the individual does not act randomly. Sometimes as a more confused condition, sometimes as a well-determined and conscious system, motivation accompanies all professional development until the achievement of its concrete desired goal. Far from being a strictly psychological and individual process, motivation also has a social dimension, expressed by the capacities of a society, an organization or social group to determine the specific impulses of human behaviour. Also, motivation has an axiological dimension determined by the necessity to transform the promoted values into internal drives of initiating and orientating the professional activity of groups or individuals. Motivation explains why the human being acts in a certain manner and settles certain objective framework he aims at.

Professional motivation in choosing didactic career

Within his professional activity, th individual selects a certain group of motives he prioritizes in a determined system of motivations. The higher

the accordance between motivations and the general operating mechanisms of the organization where he performs his activity, the bigger the possibility of the organization to generate superior satisfactions and motivations for the individuals at the existential level. The constellation of motives for which the individual engages in the work process can change along the way according to the personal subjective state and the nature of external requirements. The nature of motivation, its intensity represents not only a source of satisfaction and emotional experiences but also one of the factors of general efficiency of organizational activity.

Motivational phenomena cannot be observed directly, which makes their identification and classification very difficult. If we resort to observation, we can deduce the presence of a motive in the diverse behaviour of an individual, but it happens that similar behaviours might have different reasons, as similar reasons can generate different behaviours.

The intrinsic motivation of teachers has its roots in self-determination and their orientation towards this profession. The stronger the personal desire to continue the career in the didactic profession, the higher the intrinsic motivation. (Jesus & Lens, 2005, p. 125 apud. Jesus 1996; Nuttin, 1980, 1984 in Constantin, T. 2004)

According to the model proposed by Jesus și Lens, one can mention the fact that when choosing the didactic profession, teachers have a high valorization of objectives they propose in educating children and developing personal career. They have high expectances in relation to the performances they will achieve in the educational activity and in their personal development. The interaction with pupils will result in both successes and failures. Starting from the previous assumption, the authors demonstrate the fact that the first problems appear, when in case of a failure, teachers consider that this depended only on them as persons, as a result of their mistake and in case of a success, this happened due to favourable circumstances.

The analysis of successes and failures will determine the teacher to consider that pupils' answer does not depend on his commitment level in the educational activity. Conclusively, the possibility of success is low and this is due to chance and not to the teachers's personal capacities. Teacher's intinsic motivation for the chosen career will decrease since he does not find satisfaction in the planning and organization of educational activities. The initial objectives for which the teacher chose the didactic career are not valorized as at the beginning and all these have a powerful impact over the teacher's motivation for the profession.

A study on the value system involved in the motivation of choosing the didactic career

Our study starts from the latest studies which identified in the structure of motivation three psychological processes: *arousal, direction and persistence* (Bandura, 1986; Ford, 1992; Kanfer, 1990; Mitchell, 1982; Pinder, 1998 in Constantin, T. 2004) Thus, most researchers consider *arousal* a consequence of a need or desire which cannot be satisfied immediately and automaticaly, a fact which leads to seeking action. Secondly, researchers advocate, personal objectives being the most powerful elements which directs human behaviour, „direction of objectives towards certain targets represents a cardinal aspect of all living bodies" (Locke, 1977 in Constantin, T. 2004)**.** The third dimension of motivation is *intensity*, which determines intensity and its effort and through it, motivational persistence. The more motivated a person is, the longer and more intense the effort alloted to a certain objective. Moreover, if the desired objectives are important and significant from a personal point of view, specific and difficult, the motivational persistence will also be very intense (Pinder, 1998, in Constantin, T. 2004)

We can discern – in this context – between „learning motivation" and „professional motivation": the first denote a constellation of motives (from the basic to the self-realization ones) associated, generally, to the activity of acquiring new exprinces; the second is related to a certain occupation and to its professing in concrete contexts. It is obvious that correspondence relations (generating satisfaction) or conflictual relations (generating stress, frustration, dissatisfaction) can be established between the two motivational dimensions.

In our study we have started from the assumption that for adolescents (the students included in the investigated sample) the motives systematize, rank „circumstantially" and develop; from this point of view the academic (educational) environment is a factor of considerable influence; it offers information about the didactic profession; thus, professional motivation is valorized (motivation is actually a valorization). The implication is obvious: the control of this factor (as far as possible) can be an element of optimization in the process of motivating students for learning.

Therefore, implication in learning depend on professional motivation. We have considered that **the perception of the future profession** by students is fundamental in the structuring of professional reasons.

Due to the manifold theories and explanatory models which offer different approaches, situated mostly at opposite positions, we haven't proposed in the present study to approach a theory or a certain methodological in considering its motivation but to focus on the analysis of the motivational dominants of the students who chose the didactic career.

In order to carry out the research we used as analysis instruments a questionnaire-based investigation, the Rokeach value survey questionnaire and as a data processing instrument, we used a series of statistic operations included in SPSS.

The professional motivation questionnaire used for the research had been built adapting the professional motivation questionnaire R. Bazin (in Roco, M., 2004) including the potential motives which direct and support the didactic career.

Taking into consideration Maslow's theory, we have identified five categories of needs which underlie the didactic career motives:

- Physiological needs: a salary adequate for essential needs, possibilities for free time, decent working conditions, etc.
- Safety needs: a stable working environment, work security, convenient pension etc.
- Social needs: the feeling of affiliation to a group, social events, good working relations etc.
- Self-esteem needs: appreciation of achievements, professional satisfactions, the possibility to profess a qualitative activity, etc.
- Self-actualization: solving new problems, involvement of creative capacities, possibilities of promotion etc.

We have also considered that not all students are motivated by the same needs (at different moments, different people can be motivated by very different factors) in their option for the didactic career and for professional training.

Rokeach value survey questionnaire (Rokeach, 1970, 1973), includes two distinct sets of values – *instrumental values* which refer to preferable modes of behaviour and *terminal values* refer to desirable end-states of existence.

The subjects of our research had been the students who had chosen the didactic career for the primary and pre-school educational cycle. We have to mention that a part of them already profess the didactic career in the field (they have a work experience between 1 year and 20 years), and others are either graduates of the Pedagogical College, profile primary school-preschool teaching or highschool graduates of different profiles (philology, social sciences, mathematics-informatics etc.).

Analysis and interpretation of results

A first interpretation of questionnaire answers started from the quantitative-qualitative analysis of the categories of motives alloted by the subjects to the items which express professional motives.

Thus, the highest percentage of students (35%) motivate their interest for the didactic carer by a series of social needs (first of all the need to help the others, the possibility to comunicate, to establish interpersonal relations), needs explicable by the specific of students'age. The need for self-esteem satisfied by the didactic career comes on the second place – the teacher's social status implies consideration from pupils, parents and also from the community. Self-actualization need comes on the last place, only 9% of students indicate such type of reasons.

The analysis of answers on years of studies emphasized the fact that there are no significant differences between the three groups of subjects as concern the percentage distribution of social motives. Significant differences have been registered as regards the option for the self-esteem reasons – whereas only 15 % of the students in the I-st year decide on such motives to explain the choice of didactic career, 38% of the students in the III-rd year have such motives (the knowledge of the necessary competences of the profession as well as of the concrete activities implied create a new perception). We have to mention the fact that the number of the III-rd year students who already profess this occupation is higher than those in the I-st and II-nd year, which explains their option for motives related to the self-esteem offered by the teacher status. An analysis of the professional motives of this category of subjects underlined the fact that they opt for self-actualization motives in a high percentage unlike students who have few information about the didactic profession (for this last category the highest percentage is represented by inferior rank motives (physiological motives).

An analysis of the concrete motives which underlie the students' professional motivation had been achieved by the study of the ranks alloted to the motives included in the questionnaire.

Thus, most students (32%) opt for a reason in the category of social rmotives – „the possibility to help others", 22% for a motive in the category related to esteem and consideration „to have the feeling of doing something important". There are students (2%) who opt for motives in the physiological category („to have a precise timetable, periods of rest, free time", „to have the possibility to buy a house").

Most students do not consider as important the motives which satisfy the physiological needs (28% of students attach the last rank to material compensation, and 19% to the perspectives of an advantageous retirement)

Analyzing the rank average we found that some categories of motives, such as social, cognitive and affective reeasons occupy the same rank for the age interval analyzed.

Towards the end of the analyzed period, which synchronizes with the finalization of studies, self-actualization motives differentiate, the rank average of this category being clearly higher.

The statistical analysis of the ranks alloted to the five categories of learning motives had been achieved by calculating the rank average on categories of students and is shown in the next table:

Categories of motives	Rank average		
	I-st year	II-nd year	III-rd year
Physiological	14,3	11,5	10,1
Safety	15,3	14,2	16,7
Social	25,1	22,6	19,3
Self-esteem	21,4	22,1	26,3
Self-actualization	11,2	18,9	25,3

In the second part of the study we carried out an analysis of the axiological support considering that students' options for the hierarchy of motives is also conditioned by the reference to their value system. In the study we proposed, we considered important to analyze students' options for the first three and the last three items of the instrumental and terminal values of the Rokeach value survey questionnaire.

As concerns the option for the instrumental values, honesty (sincerity) stand as a primordial value for subjects and trust in God comes immediately on the next place. General culture, altruism and tolerance come on the last places. An analysis of the hierarchies of values within the categories of motives showed that honesty and sincerity are considered better modalities of conduct (rank average of 7,82) by those who have social motives for the didactic career.

Discipline and scrupulosity constitute first-order values for the students whose activity is dominated by safety, self-esteem and self-actualization motives (rank average 7,02, respectively 7,32).

In the hierarchies of the terminal values, as desirable end-states of existence, the superior rank is obtained by the materialization of a harmonious family (rank 6,09). The analysis of options according to the categories of reasons resulted from the questionnaire underlined the fact that the value appreciated by the subjects with social motivation is docility (commitment,compliance), by those with self-esteem motivation is dignity, by those who opted for physiological reasons the materialization of an harmonious family and for those with self-actualization motivation the value appreciated is professional satisfaction.

Conclusions

Professional motivation of students who prepare for the didactic career presents a relatively stable structure while internally the different categories of motives occupy a certain weight, according to the variable professional perception (knowledge about the respective profession, which determine a certain hierarchy of motives.

The dynamics of professional motives hierarchy is the result of the configuration in the value system of each student. By means of a conscious adequate value system, an appropriate professional motivation can lead to academic and professional performances.

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