

KEY ELEMENTS IN FAVORING PRE-UNIVERSITY TEACHER MOTIVATION IN THE CURRENT EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

TUDORACHE Ana-Maria ¹

¹ *Faculty of Economics, "Valahia" University, Targoviste*

Abstract.

The current educational system must cope with numerous and new problems, uncertainties, challenges and educational reforms. Motivating teachers to end well with the changes required by the current situation is an important issue to address, a very important element for their involvement in achieving the goals of the educational system. In this article we propose to address the issue of teacher motivation by studying motivational theories applicable to the educational system, proposing ways to follow and highlighting the connection between motivation and performance.

Keywords: *motivation, teachers, educational system, educational reform*

JEL classification: *O1, O15*

1. Introduction

In fact, in the educational system, the motivation is a term increasingly common. The complexity of this concept makes difficult the existence of universally accepted definitions. It was still not possible to be found a satisfactory answer to the question "What makes teachers to work effectively?". The difficulty stems from the fact that any researcher must make some assumptions about the reasons of the behavior that he observed or registered. Therefore, in all reasoning concerning motivation will always be an element of subjectivity. If we mention the psychology in order to find a definition of motivation we can say that motivation means to give or to explain the reason taken into account for a determined action. In the organization there is only one resource: the people and the leadership of these people ... the difference between mediocrity and excellence is the result of motivation (of these people).

¹ *Ph.D. student, Faculty of Economics, "Valahia" University, Targoviste, Romania, anatud85@yahoo.com*

Motivation is the glue that binds together the organization's objectives and strategies (Sherman, A., Bohlander, G., 1992). Motivation can be defined as all internal factors which together with several stimulus external to the situation determines direction and intensity of the behavior of a particular subject in a particular time. The reasons are those factors that trigger, channel and maintain a certain behavior. Motivation is a very complex process which includes a number of reasons that go from basic needs until the sublime (Martín Sánchez, Miguel Á., 2007, p. 25).

2. Motivational theories applicable to the educational system

There are many motivational theories, most of it purporting to deal with the behavior's delimited issues as well as the exploration and the perseverance, theories more descriptive than predictive. The main motivational theories applicable to the educational system are described below.

2.1. Theory of needs – A. Maslow

Starting from clinical observations, Abraham Maslow developed two fundamental ideas (Deaconu, A.; Podgoreanu, S.; Lefter, V., Rasca, L., 2004, p. 287):

- Human needs can be ranked on five levels, which can be represented by a pyramid;
- As long as the need is not satisfied, it is a source of motivation. When satisfied, the higher level need will become a new source of motivation.

2.2. Herzberg's theory

In the 60s, Frederick Herzberg completes Maslow's theory. He started from the principle that human existence is carried out in two separate plans: physical plan and psychological plan. His first study conducted on a number of over two hundred subjects attempted to test the concept that the human has two categories of needs: the instinctive need, animal need to avoid the pain and the exclusively human need to progress in the psychological plan. Subjects were asked to recall the times when they were extremely satisfied and those in which they strongly felt dissatisfaction. The conclusion reached by Herzberg was that the determinant factors of satisfaction, factors called or motivators or intrinsic

factors (they are largely of professional activity) and hygiene factors (linked to the environment in which they operate).

2.3. McClelland's theory

McClelland illustrated that the principal agents of motivation are (Deaconu, A.; Podgoreanu, S.; Lefter, V., Rasca, L., 2004, p. 288):

- The need for self fulfillment – the permanent desire of the individual to want success and self-improvement.
- The need for power – the desire to influence others and to lead them. It is very powerful for those who in the enterprise management.
- The need for affiliation – the desire to establish, maintain and enhance a positive emotional relationship with others.

2.4. Alderfer's ERD theory

Clayton Alderfer developed a theory of motivation based on needs, called ERD theory. It starts from the classification of needs made by Maslow and compresses the system of the five categories of needs of Maslow's pyramid in a system comprising three type of needs (Deaconu, A.; Podgoreanu, S.; Lefter, V., Rasca, L, 2004, p. 290):

- E: subsistence needs. These are needs that are satisfied by certain material conditions. They correspond to the total Maslow's physiological needs and certain safety needs (those that are satisfied by the material conditions rather than interpersonal relationships).

- R: relational needs. These needs are met by open communication and exchange of feelings and ideas with other members of the organization. They correspond quite well with those needs of belonging and esteem needs (Maslow) involving the feedback with others. In addition, Alderfer emphasizes that relational needs are met by the open, sincere, honest, interaction rather than by pleasant but uncritical things.

- D: development needs. These are met by strong personal involvement in the work environment. They include the full use of skills and individual detachment and also the creative development of new qualities and abilities. Development needs correspond to Maslow's self-fulfillment needs and those aspects of his esteem needs involving achievement and responsibility.

3. Courses of action in teachers motivation

The main courses of action in motivating teachers and increasing teachers performance can be included in 4 main lines of action, including aspects related to the structure, support in terms of autonomy, material motivation and emotional motivation.

3.1. Structure

Within this component is required:

a) *Communicating teachers what is expected of them* in relation to the objectives of the institution and specifying the consequences that will follow depending on their performance. When short and long term objectives are known and planned to achieve and when goals are clear are easier to identify the means of achieving real efficiency.

b) *Providing optimal challenges*. The task of management is to combine right people with appropriate tasks.

c) *Encouraging and supporting the development and professional training of teachers*. Schools should be learning organizations and continuous training of teachers. When teachers have the opportunity to learn new knowledge and skills end up becoming more productive.

d) *Providing regular feedback* on what is happening at school and what is happening at work and teacher effectiveness. Feedback allows the teacher to know the impact of the activities and significance of his work.

3. Supporting autonomy

A basic need of people is that they feel that their action is derived from their own will does not making things only due to external pressures. The main actions in terms of teacher autonomy can be the following:

a) *Providing opportunities to control and influence over the activities to be performed and objectives to be achieved*. Motivation increases when teachers are left to decide on how to achieve the objectives and what objectives to achieve. The key to motivate is to give people autonomy on the job and employment process.

b) *Participating to the mission of the school and decision making that affect their own work and the work of the school*. This fosters the identification with the culture and objectives of the institution.

c) Supporting teamwork and granting attention to their development.

In order to achieve various objectives, the collaboration of all people is necessary.

d) Recognizing teachers' views and feelings on different issues.

Schools and high schools principals must be willing to put themselves in the place of other teachers to understand their mode of action and needs.

e) Ensuring that the feedback given to teachers by principals has no character of control.

f) Avoid handling the reward system. The rewards of any kind are more appropriate when used as a means of confirmation of work well done than as a means of encouragement.

3.3. Material motivation

When we speak of material motivation we refer to the revenue of teachers due to obtained results. First and most important means of motivation is the nominal wage (employment) that may occur with various other forms of income (bonuses, merit pay). In recent years the educational system is not so attractive for young people career because of this. The general remark we can make by analyzing the educational system in Romania is that teachers, at least so far, are paid without taking into account the performance in their fields. The generalization of low wages discourage young people to enter the educational system; at the same time are encouraged those already in the system to turn to other fields (Cicea, C., 2004, p. 102).

3.4. Emotional motivation

Teachers have a basic need in terms of membership, merits recognition and acceptance in the group to which they belong. The human element in education is at least as important as the economic or technical element.

a) In high morality schools, the interpersonal relations are central to every aspect of school life. Interpersonal relationships are the element that helps these schools to evolve effective and also the glue that maintains the group.

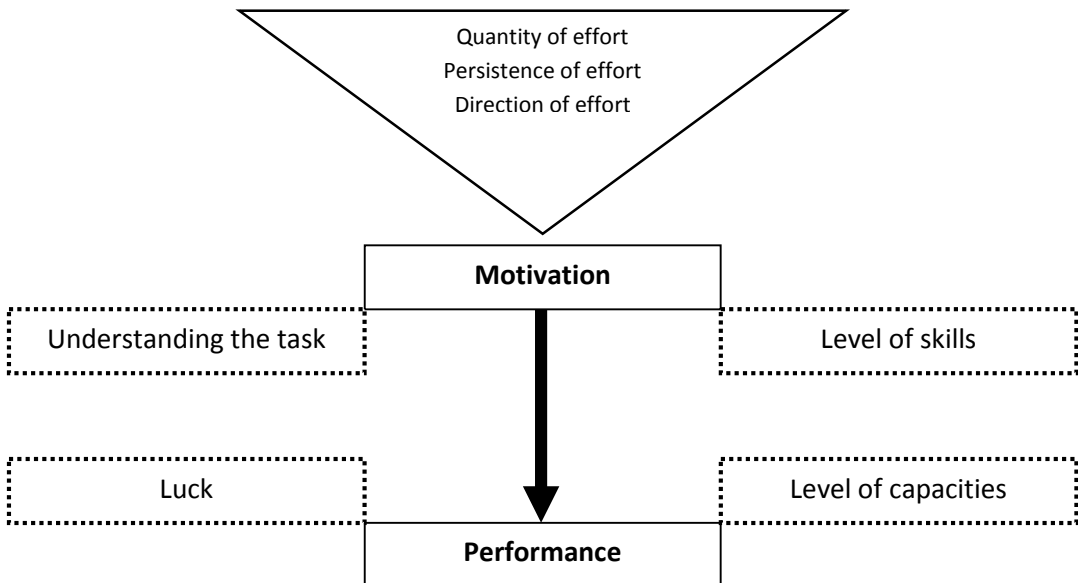
b) School and high school principals that offer information and that communicate the interest for people in school and their work must devote time also to small details which facilitate teachers' feeling of belonging to the organization. Lack of good communication generates distrust, fosters disputes and diminishes creativity because distracts teachers from the educational process.

c) When providing informational feedback about the work of teachers is convenient to draw attention on the objectives fulfilled and unfulfilled objectives still to be achieved. If failures or problems are encountered, critics have to be centered on the issue and not people. It should not abuse of negative feedback.

4. The relationship between motivation and performance

Because not always the motivated get outstanding results, there is the need to distinguish between motivation and performance. *Performance can be defined as the extent to which a member of an organization contributes to achieve the objectives of the organization* (Deaconu, A.; Podgoreanu, S.; Lefter, V., Rasca, L., 2004, p. 292). Some of the factors that contribute to individual performance in organizations are presented in the following figure:

Fig. 1: Factors contributing to individual performance at work



Source: Human factor and organizational performance, Alexandrina Deaconu, 2004, p. 293

Although motivation clearly contributes to achieving performance, the relationship is not one-to-one because many factors are interfering. Thus, it is possible that the performance of a person to be poor although he/she is very motivated (low skills, undeveloped abilities, a poor understanding of the task or opportunity may degrade the performance of even the most motivated people). It is also possible to obtain performance even if the motivational level is not too high (for e.g.: the individual has understood very well the task and directs very well his effort) (Deaconu, A.; Podgoreanu, S.; Lefter, V., Rasca, L, 2004, p. 293).

3. Conclusion

In this article I tried to do a brief overview of motivational theories applicable in the educational system and of main lines of action to increase teachers' motivation and efficiency. The motivation, that energy that drives human activity to achieve objectives can also turn into the main objective of the school or high school management team. Management team may, in turn, try to be more effective in stimulating teachers within the organization in order to be a new dimension in their actions with motivational goal oriented towards teachers.

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