The dynamics between adolescent's perceptions and learning motivation

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Abstract

There is no human action that is not determined by motivation or an entire motivational structure, which generate, lead and support that process initiated by man. In this sense, in the field of education a large number of psychological and pedagogical research conducted in the field of learning mechanism have proven that motivation is at the basisof educational success. Also, the way a young person perceives school, learning, teacher's activity and social success can influence the orientation and support of his actions. Any teacher should get to know the students he works with as well as possible, what determines them to make certain decisions, how the relationship between educational and social success is perceived, and the way young peopleperceive the role of learning in their personality development.This study aims to capture some of the dynamicsthat exist between learning motivation and these perceptions of high school students. The research considers a sample of 154 young people, aged between 14 and 19. The aim of the research, is to capture the perceptions of high school students that influence the motivation of learning. The objectives of the research were the following:a) to identify the students' perception regarding the role of school in social success; b) establishing the adolescents' perception on the impact that school learning has, in the development of their personality; c) capturing the factors that determine, from the students' perspective, social success; d) identification of the factors that determine the student not to learn and of the factors that determine him to learn. The tool used in the research was the questionnaire. The results obtained can be the source of further debates and research so as to identify other nuances of interactions between motivation and student's perceptions on various activities and social phenomena.

Keywords: learning motivation, perception of learning, teachers' perception, perception of social success

1 Introduction

Motivation is the engine of personality, any choice we make in life and any decision we make in crucial moments or in a simple human context, all are determined by motivational structures or other psychic mechanisms that can become motivation. Any state of the body is actually a motivational state (Maslow, 2007). One of the ways in which we can understand human behavior is undoubtedly to decipher the mystery of human motivation. Starting from these general ideas, but also from many researches of pedagogy and psychology, in the field of education, we can say that the motivation of learning is the key to understanding social and educational success. There are many theoretical constructs, which try to explain the motivation in the context of school learning and to identify ways to optimize the classroom activity.

This study aims to observe the interactions between learning motivation and students' perceptions. In the school context, motivation is the mechanism that initiates, stimulates, orients and supports the student's learning activities (Popenici, Fartusnic 2009). This simple and concise definition clearly indicates the functions of motivation in the particular case of learning: it determines an action, guides it and supports it in order to achieve the proposed goal. Many factors that influence the motivation to learn can appear in the educational field. One of these factors is the student's perception of school and social reality. Social perception is the ability to make interpretations and inferences about other people based on their physical appearance and verbal and nonverbal communication patterns (Aronson et al., 2010). Perceptions allow people to understand others and the social groups of the world leading to social knowledge (Smith, Mackie

2000). In conclusion, we can say that social perception is a process of understanding, evaluating and interpreting ourselves and others.

Adolescents work in a social context and interact with adults in a social institution called a school. Without having a comprehensive approach to the dynamics between perception and motivation, I will try to highlight various studies and research that show the interaction between motivation and perception.

Young people's perceptions about teachers (Wehlage et al. 1989; JF, J., Swabey, K., Pullen, D., Getenet, S. and Dowden, T. 2018), about school (Kagan, 1990; Kramer - Schlosser 1992), about the society in which they live, about the social success (Popenici et al. 2004), all prove the existence of some changes in the plan of learning motivation either in a positive or in a negative sense. The perceptions that students have about teachers, of different activities and social phenomena determine a certain way of thinking, of relating, of having a certain behavior. The way you relate to certain people, to certain activities, to certain events in the school space or outside it also determines a certain level of learning motivation. For example, students' perceptions of the school environment influence their academic achievement, school participation, school identification and use of self-regulation strategies (Wang, Holcombe, 2010). The social reality and social phenomena of postmodern society, to which students are exposed, have direct effects on learning, motivation and school results (Cuciureanu et al., 2014).

The adolescent is not detached from the values and norms promoted by the social environment in which he lives, and these can cause changes in the level of learning motivation. The socio-cognitive perspective highlights that motivation depends on a well-defined social context in which the student's perceptions interact with his environment (Zimmerman, 1990). The motivation of learning is influenced by the object of learning, but also by the conditions in which the learning takes place and by the student's perceptions on the didactic activities (Viau, 2004). Taking into account these researches, but also others, in the field of the relationship between motivation and perception in students, we tried through this study to identify the perception of high school students in relation to certain components of school reality.

2 Research design

Objectives

The aim of the research is to capture the perceptions of high school students, which influence the motivation of school learning. The following objectives are subordinated to this purpose: a) to identify the students' perception regarding the role of school in social success; b) establishing the adolescents' perception on the impact that school learning has, in the development of their personality; c) capturing the factors that determine, from the students' perspective, social success; d) identification of the factors that determine the student not to learn and of the factors that determine him to learn.

Participants

The sample has 154 students from two high schools (vocational and technological) in the city of Focșani aged between 14 and 19.

Research instrument

I used a questionnaire that investigates students' perceptions of various components of school reality: perceptions of social success, perceptions of school and learning, factors that decrease learning motivation, factors that increase learning motivation

3 Results and discussions

Regarding the perception of high school students on social success, the following results were reached. It is clear that a huge proportion (99.4%) of students have as their main goal social success, this is the main reason why young people go to school (Popenici et al. 2004). Very

interesting is what students understand by the concept of social success. Social success is seen by 86.4% of students as equivalent to a successful career and the opportunities offered by such a career.

The second place in the perceptions of young people in terms of social success is the founding of a family 72.1%. Social success is associated with the money of 64.9% of respondents. School and learning are perceived by respondents as means by which they can achieve their ultimate goal - success in life. The main reason why the students investigated in this research learn is to succeed in life (87.7%). Also, school success is seen by 89.6% of students as being closely related to social success. 80% of young people consider that if you have more studies, the possibility of having a better job is higher. These results show us that the perception of the school is still a positive one, the school is valued by a significant percentage of students.

Learning activity is perceived by students as important, due to the impact it has on the development of their personality: increased self-confidence (73.4%), increased imagination, divergent thinking, and inventiveness (78.6%), increasing the ability to reason and make judgments (85%). All these elements show us that a large proportion of the investigated students consider the learning activity as beneficial for them and as helpful in achieving the main goal, "social success". This perception of learning determines supportive behaviors and stimulates motivation for learning.

The main factor, which is an obstacle in the learning activity, is the teaching style of teachers, which is one based more on information, on the lack of a real dialogue with the class. About 60% of respondents have this perception.

Another factor perceived as an obstacle is the overcrowded curriculum is considered by 68.8% of respondents. From the category of factors perceived as beneficial for learning motivation are: interactive teaching methods, for 42.9% of respondents this factor is considered very important. The socio-emotional climate during the classes is perceived by 46.1% of students as important in increasing the motivational level for learning. This indicates the need for students to be valued, accepted by both school and teachers. Emotional tension, teachers' rigidity are aspects that induce anxiety, stress and affect the level of learning motivation. A school environment that facilitates a sense of community, a sense of belonging among students is very important (Allen et al. 2018; Battistich et al. 1997; Osterman 2000).

Conclusions

Analyzing the research results, we can make some comments. First of all, all the other perceptions are built around the perception of social success. The purpose of adolescents is to promote and integrate into society and gain a higher social status through a professional career. This seems to be the main mechanism that influences learning motivation.

The perception of the learning activity shows a valorization of the school and the learning activity which is seen as having a positive impact on the intellectual and social development. This perception also has beneficial effects on learning motivation. The factors perceived as an obstacle to motivation are not a surprise, as they continue to show some shortcomings of the education system.

Any teacher should know as well as possible the students he works with, what determines them to make certain decisions and to have certain behaviors. In order to understand them, we need to know their expectations, perceptions and their own life goals.

The limitations of this research, which is on a small sample of two high schools in the province, must also be taken into account. The research results can only be extended strictly to the investigated population. The objective of the research was not to establish statistical correlations between various items, but an accumulation of information in order to deepen this phenomenon through further research.

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