

## Motivation Factors of Adult Learning

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### Abstract

Motivation is the driver of adult learning. The paper reveals the importance and peculiarities of adults' learning process. There has been analyzed the impact of external and internal factors on the efficiency of adult learning; various approaches to the typology of intrinsic motivation are presented. The author has also considered the components of motivational sphere (emotional aspect, the set aims, the ability to learn), which can significantly influence the level of adult learning motivation.

**Keywords:** *motivation, adult, learning, external factors, intrinsic motivation, motivational sphere*

### Introduction

The current level of socio-economic development, technological achievements, and information and communication technologies encourage lifelong learning. Under the conditions of the globalized economy, education as a production factor is gaining particular importance. It is becoming the person's need as knowledge and intelligence allow him/her to be competitive in the labour market, find the best ways to meet immediate needs and meet the highest ones – self-realization. It should be emphasized that humanistic interpretation of adult education sees it as a process of incomplete, non-rigid planning specified by demands and human needs at different stages of adult life.

At the same time, as foreign researchers point out, education must be consistently caused by specific needs of this category of adult students and must have a certain value for them, and the structure and form of adult education must be

relevant to their needs. However, as noted in the concepts of adult education, it must be significantly different from the education of children and teenagers (Creighton, Hudson, 2002).

## **Research Methodology**

One of the most important ways of optimizing adult education is adult students' management motivation, which is based on the results of scientific analysis of the regularities of their personal development. The importance of the motivational sphere of the learning process, according to M. Alexeeva, is equivalent to the knowledge of the drivers of this process. "No one, even a highly qualified teacher, will achieve the desired result if their efforts are not coordinated with the motivational basis of the learning process" (Alexeeva, 1974, 40).

The psychological basis of humanist pedagogy is the concept of motivation by A. Maslow, who gives a classification of human needs, reflecting their hierarchy and relationships. In the psychologist's view, every person is born with certain types of needs, in which the lower-order needs are substituted by the higher-order ones after the first needs have been satisfied. The perceived need usually becomes a motive of the following activity. A great number of motives are subconscious. After their "output" at the level of consciousness, they contribute to solving problems of human preservation and progress (Maslow, 1998).

The term "motive" comes from the French «motif», which literally means "encouragement." Motives cause the personality's behavior, the source of which is needs, and they serve as the drivers of any activity (Psychological dictionary, 1982, 96). So, the motive is understood as everything that motivates people to action. Motivation is a system of motives, which defines specific activities or forms of human behavior. It is necessary for the effective implementation of decisions and planned tasks (ibid).

However, for adult learning, motivation is not just a set of motives, for situational factors (the influence of different people, and the specifics of activity and situation, etc.) play an important role. Thus, motivation is the combination of all factors (both personal and situational) that encourage a person's activity (Alexeeva, 1974).

## **Research Results**

Adult motivation is manifested in setting goals, maintaining attention throughout certain activity, applying efforts and perseverance to achieve them. Motivation manages the activity, the impelling reason for which is the adult's need, the subjective probability of success, as well as the individual evaluation of achievements.

Motivation can be presented in the form of the subsequent stages:

- reasons for behavior;
- models of behavior;
- adherence to the chosen model despite the difficulties and obstacles (Williams, M., Burden R., 1997, 121–122).

Educational psychology studies give the grounds for the conclusion that in adults' learning high positive motivation can play the compensatory factor role, especially if a person has low ability or insufficient stock of knowledge. However, it does not work in the opposite direction. In other words, a high level of knowledge and abilities cannot compensate for low-level learning motivation or its lack. Thus, it cannot lead to successful learning.

The problem of adult learning motivation has not been under consideration in educational psychology and pedagogy until recently. The papers devoted to the problem in question have been appearing lately in Russia (P.Galperin, L. Bozhovich, B. Dodonov, Y. Kolyutkin, S.Rubinstein, O. Leontyev, A. Markova, S. Moskvichov, G. Sukhobskaya, Y. Shorokhova, P. Yakobson) and in other countries, particularly in Great Britain, the USA, and Poland (K. Levin, P. Fress, Z. Freid, J. Atkinson, G. Newtten, A. Maslow, K. Hall, E. Torndike, I. Sorokosz). In Ukraine the question of the peculiarities of adult learning motivation has been superficially researched by only some scientists (S. Boltivets, I. Melikhova, E. Pomytkin).

Of course, within one article it is impossible to analyze the nature and regularities of the dynamics of learning activity motivation in various forms of adult education, at evening and correspondence schools for adults, PhD schools, in the system of short-term or long-term courses, the system of upgrading skills, etc. Various forms of education and training result from different goals, objectives, and, therefore, the motivation of adult learning activity in each case will have its own specific features.

It is worth mentioning that the content and nature of human feelings, motives, and activities are changing with the person's age, their dependence on social factors is increasing. A lot of motives get more stable, some of them becoming leading throughout their life or for its specified segment. Such motives have a direct or indirect impact on the whole nature of human learning, its selective attitude to

certain disciplines, and subjects. It cannot be underestimated that the significant role in adult learning is played by their interests. They always influence any activity including the learning process and create a setting for learning.

What motivates adults to learn? Scientists believe that the motivation to learn is influenced by internal and external factors, although their interpretation may differ significantly.

For instance, I. Doronina states that two groups of factors interact in the learning process. The first one is the factors of learning activities (methods of training, the content of the educational process, organization of training activities, methods of monitoring and assessment, socio-psychological phenomena in the study group, socio-economic relations);

The second one directly concerns the individual student's characteristics (common features of motivational sphere, skills and learning ability, attitude to learning – the initial condition of forming motivation, inner well-being in the training team, their status and self-esteem, previous experience) (Doronina, 2013).

## **Discussion**

Actually, the learning activity involves the process of arranging the learning process, the subject itself and teachers with their certain techniques, experience and abilities. A student is engaged in the learning process with their own set of queries, interests, needs and goals.

In this sense, it is advisable to agree with Viktor Chirkov that learning motivation consists of two areas of “rozkonservuvannya” (revealing motivational potential of the learning process), on the one hand, and the disclosure of the individual's potential, on the other (Chirkov, 1991, 27). The question is what the motivation process starts with – either with activity and its organization or with the individual and formation of their objectives. These components must always be considered together, because in a real socio-cultural situation an adult, unlike a child, may be disadvantaged (professional employment, social responsibility, overload, poor remuneration for work, permanent condition of stress).

Another approach to the issue of adult learning motivation shows that the process is stimulated by two types of drivers – external factors and internal motives.

As a rule, an important external factor is considered to be transformation of the labour market. Since joining the global economy, trade liberalization and internationalization have led to competition not only in the national but also in the global market, it is necessary to bear in mind that motivation in science, as Polish

scholar J. Sorokosz says, depends on many situations, including the situation in the labour market (Sorokosz). Another external driver, which is typical of the majority of post-Soviet countries, is the transition from the centralized to market economy. All in all, these factors influenced the change in the occupational structure, some professions are disappearing and new ones appearing. This demands greater professional mobility and hence continuous training and learning, re-training, and upgrading one's qualifications. One more important driver is the introduction of new technologies in all the spheres of the public life, which have changed the labour and imposed new requirements on the human capital, i.e., the skills and abilities that, in turn, are connected with learning as well.

Y. Kulyutkin considers external factors from the opposite point of view. In his opinion, external motivators are evaluation, incentives, penalties that are beginning to play the secondary role for adults or they do not exist at all, and the first place belongs to internal motivation, based on the understanding of the importance and relevance of the material (Motivation, 1972).

According to M. Bryn and S. Mann, the adult learner's internal motivation is caused by the constant desire to learn and can be characterized as the attitude: "I really want to do" rather than "I do it because I have to," or "I am required to" (Autonomy, 1997).

A large number of studies on internal motivation of adult learning are conducted in the USA. In particular, in 1961 Houle proposed three types of adult learning orientations: a) goals b) activities, and c) the learning process. Similar studies were carried out by other scientists, e.g. Sheffield, Burgess, Bosher, Grabowski, and Knox.

Y. Kulyutkin and G. Sukhobska state that the internal motivation of adult learning activity is miscellaneous, but it can be reduced to three types: utilitarian motivation, motivation of prestige and motivation of knowledge itself (Motivation, 1972, 63–67). Utilitarian motivation may be narrow (when it is defined only by the personal needs of man) and broad (when personal needs are linked to the social ones). In both cases, the origins of motivation are social, human and professional practice which needs to be improved. Otherwise, the personal need can match the needs of production or the public. Motivation of prestige is also a significant incentive for the inclusion of an adult in the learning process. In this case, he/she enjoys learning because other people around him/her do not learn and this enhances his/her status and creates the opportunity to stand out from the others. The third type of motivation, i.e., when knowledge is acquired just for the sake of knowledge, is the least common.

On the basis of the above-mentioned, three types of adult learners are distinguished. In particular, they are adults oriented to **purpose** (they use education

to achieve clear objectives); **activities** (they participate in training programs for acquiring knowledge, expansion of social contacts); and **training** (they seek to acquire knowledge for knowledge's sake).

Learning adults may often embody several types, as well as change one type into another, depending on the situation.

Since the learning activity is the same activity as any other, it can be characterized as an activity on the whole. So, when the most important motive for the person is the achievement, then it will occupy the leading position in the learning process. If a person is inclined to the motive of avoiding failure in life, then he/she will have the same problems (significant fear in the exam, the difficulties in solving the negative consequences of his/her own errors, etc.).

Thus, the study of motivation to learn should be considered together with human motivation as a whole. Only within the context of the overall motivational sphere of personality can one see the real motives of the adult learner structure that will enable them to compare, identify similarities and differences, and distinguish the expectations and needs of man. In this sense, it is advisable to add the opinion of P. Jacobson. The researcher writes: "The essential features of human motivation are not incorporated in the individual characteristics of the person's development and in particular his/her awareness as a social being. So, determining the motivation of human behavior outside the context of his/her social nature is fundamentally flawed" (Jacobson, 1969).

The need to study the motivation of adult learning is caused not only by high material contributions in this area, but also by the importance of inclusion of methods and means of motivation management.

There are opportunities to force an adult to learn, but to learn and enjoy is possible only through the formation of proper motivation. At the same time, it is advisable to approach learning motivation in terms of its formation. The study of motivation can serve as a starting point in creating means of its formation, development or correction of the existing motivational sphere. This aspect is extremely important not only for adults who are learning, but also for potential students whose motivation has not been formed yet or has been at the low level for a set of reasons.

In this sense, it is desirable to pay attention to the proposal made by A. Markova, to analyze motivational component areas that can make a significant impact on it (Markova, 1990).

Firstly, it is the general attitude to learning, i.e. certain emotional aspect. Secondly, it is the aims which the adult student sets before him/her. And thirdly, it is the person's ability to learn.

The first and second components together cause the reason to learn and the attitude to the learning process. The ability to learn characterizes the opportunity to learn, and it plays an important role in the student's self-esteem. The more capable he believes himself, the more engaged in the learn process he will be. The value of realizing their ability to learning increases for the people with the strong motive to avoid failure. The lack of confidence in their abilities can greatly reduce their desire to learn or contribute to negative emotions and unwillingness to learn.

## **Conclusions**

Summarizing the above-mentioned, it should be stressed that in order to achieve the efficiency of subject-subject learning activities among the audience of adult students it is necessary to thoroughly analyze the motives that drive them to learn, to determine the needs, interests, attitudes, and inclinations. All of these generally have a significant impact on learning outcomes.

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