

STUDY ON LEARNING MOTIVATION OF MASTER'S STUDENTS IN MASTER'S COURSE IN LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN

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Abstract: *The aim of our study is to present the topic of adult learning and its motivation. We first define the definitions and importance of learning in a person's life. We then turn to the definitions of motivation and the historical background and evolution of adult learning. We also point out some big events that helped reaching the today's form of adult learning. Moreover, the motivation of adult learning as a function of different motivational theories is presented. In the second half of the study, an initial research is focusing on the motivation of adult learning. The subjects of our research are young adults who are studying at the Master's programme in Management and Organisation at the Faculty of Economics, University of Debrecen. Our questionnaire was filled by 27 students, as only a small sample was available during the pandemic time. By the results, we want to get answers to which different factors motivate examined young adults in studying. According to the results, these students are mostly motivated by the fact that they can largely shape their own learning effectiveness and external factors do not affect this that much. Moreover, they perceive that they have control over their learning performance, which has a great influence on their learning motivation. With the results, we want to give an idea of how the learning motivation of the students can be characterized to both lecturers and human resource professionals working in the private sector. We intend to expand the research to a larger sample in the future.*

Keywords: *adult learning, motivation, academic students*

JEL Classification: I23, I26, D83

1. Introduction

Learning is part of our daily lives. During our lives, we spend several decades in school. But the learning process does not even cease after leaving school. Today, the term of lifelong learning has been mentioned a lot. This is no coincidence, as we must keep up with our rapidly developing and changing world in all areas of life. In the private life, there is also a continuous change in the workplace around us, which makes it essential to lifelong learning. Continuous, institutionalized learning

between the age of 18-23 generally ends in person's life by completing the vocational secondary school, grammar school or university. However, the learning process itself is far from ending at that time.

2. Theoretical Background

Conner (1997) states that "learning can be defined formally as the act, process, or experience of gaining knowledge or skills". People are in the learning process from the moment of birth. In any age they can learn everything that their minds perceive. Learning strengthens the brain as it builds and strengthens the relationship between nerves. Although the human being fundamentally likes known facts and the change is disturbing, they are still looking for newness and trying to respond to them.

This means that, leaving the student years, people seek for the need, desire, and importance. for learning, Learning is present in several forms in our lives. Foley (2004) distinguishes several learning dimensions. According to him, people are in continuous learning through formal and informal channels. The formal channel is the most popular way of adult learning. Follows a specified syllabus, teachers help the process, and the result is usually obtaining a qualification. Informal mode is gaining through the acquisition of their own experiences, outside the walls of the institution. Cuenca and Pérez de Guzmán (2003) believe that learning is part of human nature in such a way that man is the subject of learning. Without this ability, life would not be possible, as one would not be able to survive. This also means that when man stops learning, they risk the ability to survive. Learning makes people fit and integrate into the environment. They will get continuous feedback from the environment that improves all its abilities while assimilating to the behavioural patterns of society in which they live. Learning is a permanent need that can not be eliminated in no age. Carrasco and Martín (1997) reviewed changes in adult learning over time. They describe that although the importance of education was recognized in ancient times, but it took many centuries until society demanded education for adults. In the 19th century they realized to give access to education to those who did not have previously and to renew previously acquired knowledge. In the 19th century they created the so-called adult classes in France. During 20th century, adult education expanded its horizons because of continuous changes in the economic, social, technological, and political environment.

In the webpage of UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, we can read that in 1949, reacting to the World War II. the UNESCO's member states joined to discuss how adult learning and education could help the peace and international understanding. This international conference was named as "Confintea" name (French: Contress Internationale Sur L'Education des Adultes). This conference was an important milestone in the recognition of the importance of adult education.

In the UNESCO 1976 publication we can read that the adult learning involves all the educational processes that complement the knowledge acquired earlier in schools, at different levels, formally or informally. Adults are able to enrich their knowledge, develop their professional ability. During the introduction of adult learning methods,

various socio-cultural factors should be taken into consideration. The adult learning can interfere with barriers, such as family or professional ones, which could burden adults. Knowing the psychology and motivation of learning is also essential for the successful process. We will give you a detailed explanation of this later.

The objective of the adult learning policy is derived from the Lisbon and the Europe 2020 strategy. The Europe 2020 strategy states that lifelong learning and skill development are key to handle the current economic crisis and the aging of the population. In 2008 was the first time to determine the common priorities for the adult education sector and created the foundations of a coordinated European policy cooperation. Loboda (2007) also highlights several aspects of adult learning. It mentions its economic importance as skilled labour is the most important resource of companies. It covers the changes in population pyramid that the aging of population is a serious problem today. If the older generations continue to learn and train themselves to meet the specific challenges of compliance, they can continue to be employed, thus reducing the problem of the state for care of elderly people.

Before discussing the motivations for learning, it is essential to talk about motivation itself. According to Bakacsi (2010), "motivation is the willingness to make efforts towards the achievement of organisational goals, which also satisfies individual needs." Bakacsi interpreted motivation in the organizational context, but from his words we can infer motivation as an internal driving force that pushes us in a particular direction.

Kenrick et al (2010) distinguish two major sources of motivation. Functional, i.e. intrinsic, motivation stems from a lack of motivation in the individual. In contrast, proximal motivation is triggered by external events. The motivation for adult learning can therefore be divided into two broad categories. If learning is triggered by intrinsic motivation, then the individual is driven to acquire new knowledge by an internal drive, curiosity, desire to know or the possibility of progress through acquired knowledge. If the motivation comes from outside, for example in the case of a compulsory on-the-job training or in the hope of a higher salary, then proximal motivation may be at work in the individual.

According to Lieb (1991) motivation is an indispensable element of learning, because if a person does not recognise the need to acquire the information, learning will not be successful. To achieve this, teachers should motivate learners in several ways. This means that one of the external sources of motivation can come from the teacher. The teacher should create a friendly, open atmosphere and associate a positive feeling with the teaching process. The teacher himself/herself should also reflect openness because this will give the learner the feeling that he/she can always turn to him/her for help. However, an open atmosphere is not the same as a relaxed atmosphere. If the material to be taught is a high priority, it is worth adding some level of stress to the atmosphere, as the right amount of stress can have a positive effect on students. However, teachers should also pay attention to the level of difficulty of the tasks, as the task should be difficult enough to be challenging, but not so difficult that it becomes an unsolvable problem.

According to a study presented by Morstain and Smart (1977), six major motivational dimensions can be distinguished when talking about learning. Social relationships describe the need for an individual to acquire new knowledge by getting to know other individuals or by belonging to a group of individuals. Other motivating forces within this dimension include acceptance by others and interest in similar subjects. In the dimension of external expectations, the individual is driven by external motivation, for example, perceived at work. In the social well-being dimension, education prepares people to participate in society and to actively serve the interests of society. In the dimension of professional development, the study suggests that the development of individual competences helps individuals to achieve a higher status in their profession. The escape or stimulation dimension refers to the desire to escape from an environment perceived as boring, and thus aims to alleviate boredom. The dimension of cognitive interest implies that the individual has a self-directed desire to learn, driven by an intrinsic motivation to enrich his or her knowledge and to learn simply for the "pleasure of acquiring new knowledge".

3. Methodology

One of the most used measures of the motivation of learning is in connection with Pintrich and colleagues (1991). The questionnaire was designed and developed by a research team at the University of Michigan in 1991. The questionnaire contains a total of 81 questions and is divided into 15 subscales. The authors explain that the scales can be used both together and separately. The subscales are grouped into two major themes, namely the motivation scales and the learning strategies scales. In the present study, the learning motivation scale was used, which comprises a total of 31 questions out of the 81 mentioned before. In analysing the questions within the learning motivation scale, we will review the results obtained by subscales, which are namely: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, task value, learning belief regulation, learning and achievement, and test anxiety subscales.

The MSLQ questionnaire was adapted into Hungarian by Éva D. Molnár (2013). In our primary research we compiled the questionnaire based on her translation. Respondents were asked to rate the statements on a 7-point Likert scale, where a value of 1 indicates "not at all true for me" and a value of 7 indicates "absolutely true for me".

The sample of the research includes students of the Master's course in Leadership and Organizations at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Debrecen. The questionnaire was filled in by 27 students, as a small sample was available. The respondents included 9 men and 18 women. 23 full-time and 4 part-time students completed the questionnaire. The Master's course in Leadership and Organizations is taught in 4 semesters, with students from all 4 semesters represented in the sample. The total number of first semester students was 14, the total number of second semester students was 5, the total number of third semester students was 4 and the total number of fourth semester students was also 4.

4. Results

The results of the primary research will be presented by analysing the responses to the questions of the MSLQ learning motivation scale. The motivation scale consists of 6 subscales, and the results will be presented using them.

Intrinsic motivation refers to the fact that the student engages in the task for reasons such as challenge, curiosity, mastery. The student's participation in the task represents a goal for him/herself and not participation to achieve the goal (Pintrich et al.1991). The results for the subscale are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Results of the Intrinsic Goal Orientation subscale

Item	Mean	St.d.
1. In a class like this, I prefer course material that really challenges me so I can learn new things	6.11	1.19
16. In a class like this, I prefer course material that arouses my curiosity, even if it is difficult to learn.	6.00	1.14
22. The most satisfying thing for me in this course is trying to understand the content as thoroughly as possible	5.44	1.53
24. When I have the opportunity in this class, I choose course assignments that I can learn from even if they don't guarantee a good grade.	3.85	1.94
Scale:	5.35	1.72

Source: Own research, 2021

Extrinsic motivation is complementary to intrinsic motivation and refers to the fact when a student engages in a task for reasons such as grades, rewards, performance, evaluation by others and competition. If one has high extrinsic motivation, then participation in a learning task is a means to an objective (Pintrich et al.1991).

Table 2.: Results of the Extrinsic Goal Orientation subscale

Item	Mean	St.d.
7. Getting a good grade in this class is the most satisfying thing for me right now.	5.19	1.59
11. The most important thing for me right now is improving my overall grade point average, so my main concern in this class is getting a good grade	5.15	1.68
13. If I can, I want to get better grades in this class than most of the other students.	5.11	1.74
30. I want to do well in this class because it is important to show my ability to my family, friends, employer, or others.	4.74	1.89
Scale:	5.05	1.72

Source: Own research, 2021

The task value refers to the student's assessment of how interesting, important and useful it is to complete the task. A high task rating results in increased participation

in learning, whereas a low task rating results in less student engagement in each task (Pintrich et al.1991).

Table 3.: Task Value subscale

Item	Mean	St.d.
10. It is important for me to learn the course material in this class.	5.30	1.71
27. Understanding the subject matter of this course is very important to me.	5.15	1.77
17. I am very interested in the content area of this course.	5.11	1.63
26. I like the subject matter of this course.	5.04	1.89
4. I think I will be able to use what I learn in this course in other courses.	5.00	1.66
23. I think the course material in this class is useful for me to learn.	4.93	1.82
Scale:	5.09	1.72

Source: Own research, 2021

This subscale refers to the belief that results depend on the student's own efforts, as opposed to external factors such as the teacher. If students believe that their academic effort will change their learning, they are more likely to learn in a more planned and effective way. That is, if students feel they can control their academic performance, they are more likely to be able to strategically implement what is needed to make the desired changes (Pintrich et al.1991).

Table 4.: Control of Learning Beliefs subscale

Item	Mean	St.d.
2. If I study in appropriate ways, then I will be able to learn the material in this course.	6.37	0.79
18. If I try hard enough, then I will understand the course material.	5.89	1.12
9. It is my own fault if I don't learn the material in this course.	5.44	1.69
25. If I don't understand the course material, it is because I didn't try hard enough.	4.44	1.67
Scale:	5.54	1.53

Source: Own research, 2021

The scale items assess two areas of expectation: success and self-efficacy. Expectations of success refer to performance expectations and relate to task performance. Self-efficacy includes perceptions about the ability to complete a task and confidence in one's ability to complete the task (Pintrich et al.1991).

Table 5: Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance

Item	Mean	St.d.
12. I'm confident I can understand the basic concepts taught in this course.	5.89	1.22
21. I expect to do well in this class.	5.52	1.42
31. Considering the difficulty of this course, the teacher, and my skills, I think I will do well in this class.	5.44	1.12
5. I believe I will receive an excellent grade in this class.	5.26	1.40
15. I'm confident I can understand the most complex material presented by the instructor in this course	5.00	1.57
20. I'm confident I can do an excellent job on the assignments and tests in this course.	5.00	1.11
29. I'm certain I can master the skills being taught in this class.	5.00	1.36
6. I'm certain I can understand the most difficult material presented in the readings for this course.	4.78	1.42
Scale:	5.24	1.36

Source: Own research, 2021

Test anxiety negatively affects academic performance. Anxiety is divided into two major components: a worry component and an emotion component. The worry component refers to the negative thoughts students have that interfere with performance, while the emotion component refers to the affective and physiological arousal aspects of anxiety. They found that cognitive anxiety and preoccupation with performance were the largest sources of performance impairment. Effective learning strategies can help reduce levels of anxiety (Pintrich et al.1991). The results for the subscale are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Test Anxiety

Item	Mean	St.d.
28. I feel my heart beating fast when I take an exam.	4.19	2.00
8. When I take a test I think about items on other parts of the test I can't answer.	3.44	2.06
19. I have an uneasy, upset feeling when I take an exam.	3.41	2.08
14. When I take tests I think of the consequences of failing.	2.63	1.82
3. When I take a test I think about how poorly I am doing compared with other students	2.19	1.57
Scale:	3.17	2.01

Source: Own research, 2021

Referring to the results, we can see that the highest score was obtained in the subscale of Control of Learning Beliefs (M=5.54). According to this score, students feel that they largely shape their own learning effectiveness and that external factors do not influence this that much. Furthermore, students perceive that they have control over their learning performance. This is followed by the Intrinsic Goal Orientation subscale (M=5.35), which shows that students can be motivated by the involvement

in the task, the challenge the task provides and the opportunity to acquire it. The third highest score was obtained by the Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance subscale (M=5.24), which refers to the expectation of success and self-efficacy, which may also be an element of intrinsic motivation. The Extrinsic Goal Orientation subscale (M=5.05) and the Task Value subscale (M=5.09) had a similar score. While extrinsic motivation represents recognition and reward, task value represents how useful and important the student thinks it is to complete the task. The lowest score was obtained by the Test Anxiety subscale (M=3.17), where the lower the value the more favourable.

In addition to analysing the results, we also compared them with international results to get a more complete picture of the learning motivation of the students. In the comparison, we gathered data from a similar sample, comparing it to student surveys conducted at the University of Tartu in Estonia (2015), Lovely Professional University in India (2020), Utah State University in the US (2013) and Beijing Forestry University in China (2013).

Compared to the international results shown in the first figure, the results are very diverse across the world. Among our own results, the Intrinsic Goal Orientation subscale and the Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance subscale outperform internationally, as well as the test anxiety subscale - for which the low value is the favourable one. However, the Control beliefs regulation subscale, which scores highest in our own research, is below internationally

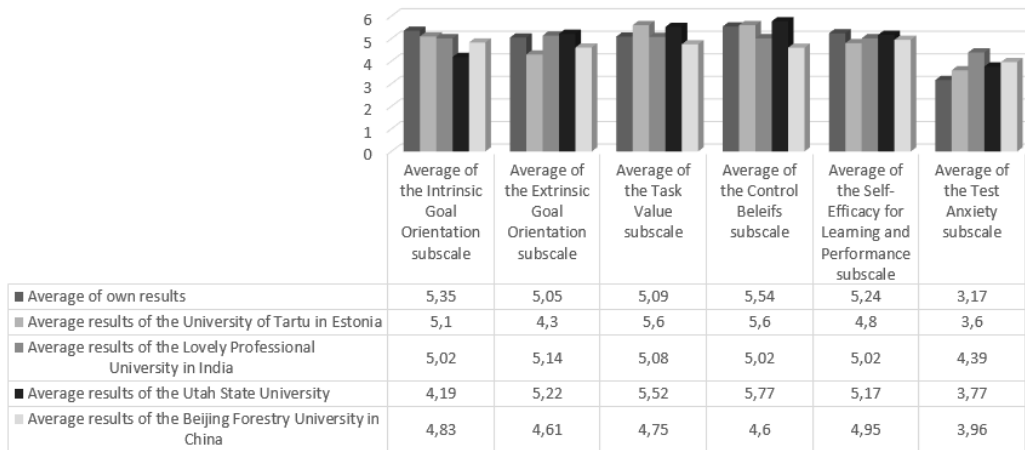


Figure 1: Comparison with international results
 Source: Own research, 2021

5. In conclusion

This study presents theories related to adult learning and its motivation. In the second part of the study, an existing and validated questionnaire was used to assess the learning-related motivations of the students. It was concluded that intrinsic goal orientation and control beliefs, i.e. the regulation of learning beliefs, scored the highest averages. Internationally, the test anxiety of the

students surveyed is relatively low, which is a good result for this scale. It is also worth pointing out that students' intrinsic motivation to learn is higher than their extrinsic motivation, which is certainly an advantage. As we pointed out before, with these results, we would like to give an idea of how the learning motivation of the students can be characterized for the human resource professionals. To sum up, we can see that these students can be engaged in the task by challenges or curiosity, so the professionals or the academic teachers have to come up with interesting tasks for the students.

The questionnaire used in this research covered the relevant part of the whole questionnaire, so only the relevant scale was used. In the future we would like to extend our results by using and analysing the other half of the questionnaire.

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