

UDC: 37.018.43:004]:005.32

(Professional paper)

MOTIVATION – A KEY DRIVE TO EFFECTIVE E-LEARNING

Kitanovska Violeta, PhD in Pedagogy,

Bitola RN Macedonia

kitanovskavioleta@yahoo.com

Abstract: The contemporary education, as a result of the global health crises, is faced to the challenge to transform the permanent learning process, from a process that has been held in a classroom, to an online learning process. The transformation is followed by many attempts to find out the best learning methods, the most effective teaching and learning strategies, the most suitable applicative programs or platforms, that, through the learning contents, will reach the educational goals the most effectively.

It's a fact that the learners don't treat the same the regular "in classroom" learning and the online learning. One of the reasons is the lack of motivation for online learning.

This study elaborates the problem of motivation for online learning among the primary school learners. The presented approaches indicate how to stimulate the e-learners the most effectively.

Key words: Motivation, online teaching and learning, stimulation, learning.

E-LEARNING AND MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING

Today, due to the global health crisis that has occurred to the humanity, the e-learning has got a new, important role in the process of permanent education. The learners are geographically separated from their teachers, and also from the main educational institutions – schools. The learning process becomes a kind of distant education, mediated by technological tools. That's why, the e-learning rises from an alternative learning strategy to a compulsory learning model, something that must be included. E-learning brings learning to learners instead learners to learning.

In such circumstances, the teachers are faced to a big challenge: to create an effective learning environment, especially for the primary school students. In fact, an effective learning

environment is described as an environment where the students, actively engaged, can undertake learning activities to adopt new knowledge and skills and can exhibit their performance in order to enhance their creativity. But, it is not easy at all to design an effective and motivating learning environment. Although, there are a plenty of requirements that should be accomplished, such as providing appropriate IT tools, computers or other internet capable devices, internet connection, then, possessing indispensable manipulative skills and abilities, the main problem is motivation. How would the teachers be able to motivate the primary school students to sit in front of the computer and get actively involved into the e-learning course? Stimulating the factors that enhance students' interest and desire to be continually and strongly committed to the e-learning will result with the deeply motivational learning process.

THE ROLE OF MOTIVATION IN PROVIDING SUCCESSFULL E-LEARNING PROCESS

There is a big truth in Terrel H. Bell's phrase that says: "There are three things to emphasize in teaching. The first is motivation, the second is motivation and the third is motivation".

The motivation has always been considered as a critical factor for successful educational process and the basic reason for current study. Brophy's (2015) definition describes motivation as "a theoretical construct to explain the initiation, direction, intensity, persistence and quality of behavior, especially goal-directed behavior". But it's quite better to understand that the motivation is a process, not just an end result, because it cannot be directly perceived, it raises from some actions, such as, the way of tasks solving, the efforts and achievements. The contemporary views relate motivation to personal cognitive and affective processes, to emotions, thoughts, beliefs and goals.

These interpretations implicate to the permanent relations between motivation and education. Here, the motivation is treated as an essential consideration in teaching and learning activities. It is the reason for doing something, in fact, a reason or desire for learning. Also, it indicates whether a learner persists in a course, shows the level of his engagement, the quality of his work and the level of his achievement. The motivation is a key drive to effective learning, an energizing force that produces results.

E-learning or online learning, by itself, is a kind of distance learning, where the learner uses IT tools to "access the materials, to interact with the content, instructor and other learners, to obtain the support during the learning process, in order to acquire knowledge, to construct personal meaning and to grow from the learning experience" (Ally, 2008). Such an educational environment doesn't seem to be an inspirational learning environment. The feelings of isolation, the physical absence of a teacher, the frustrations with technology handling, the poor motivation,

the time constraints due to other responsibilities may cause the learners to participate half-heartedly or to withdraw completely from online courses.

In a sense of this, motivation can be used as a powerful partner in designing and developing efficient e-learning process. Thus, the core of creating online course that leaves lasting impression and achieves learning objectives is to uncover the motivating factors. Addressing motivating factors can assist educators in empowering their students to appreciate the importance and value of learning activities.

There is a great complexity of motivational factors that affect e-learning. They all indicate the methods of how the learner can fully and easily experience the education. In a situation like present, when the learners are not allowed to attend schools and when the e-learning is an exclusive choice to continue the permanent education, the motivation must be treated as a fascinating stimulus able to convert online course in to a rewarding and amazingly fulfilling experience.

The main purpose of motivation as an “engine” of learning (Paris & Turner, 1994) is to create inspiring learning environment where the students will enjoy the activities, will consume the opportunities to learn and to explore, will actualize their potentials. Different learners have different learning needs, different capabilities, divers levels of knowledge base, so that requires a variety of approaches to address and successfully meet their needs, to capture their interest, to undertake their curiosity.

Keller (1987), presenting The ARCS Model of Motivation, emphasizes four basic strategies to enhance learners’ motivation (attention, relevance, confidence, satisfaction). But to perceive the problem with e-learning motivation among the primary school learners integrally, there should be recognized many more motivational aspects. Some of them are usually used at the beginning of the teaching-learning process, purposely, to initiate students and to face them to a challenge, to inspire their curiosity, to stimulate their thinking. Other motivating factors are present during the whole teaching-learning process helping to maintain the running activities.

Somebody used to say that well began is half done. That’s why the first step in motivating primary school students for e-learning is to draw their **attention** and to arouse their interest for learning. Maybe, the easiest way to do so is to pique learners’ curiosity. Primary school children are naturally curious. It doesn’t seem quite difficult to put them into a challenging situation that stimulates their capabilities to explore and to learn. Grabbing students’ attention at the very beginning ensures they will think creatively and critically. Therefore, a variety of methods could be employed:

- *Challenge problems* are one of the best challenge tools that can enhance learners’ curiosity, so the motivation for learning. Facing with challenge problem, learners should actively think to find appropriate solutions. Challenge problems might be presented as a topic, statement or short motivating story;

- *Open-ended questions* are used to hound on diversity of learners ideas, to give their own opinion, to present their feelings. Learners' orientations should be taken into account in the organizational module and guiding the e-learning process;
- *Provocative questions* are some interesting, diverting questions that stimulate children's curiosity and provide productive way of motivation. By answering these questions learners give a kind of a feedback showing that they are already "in" the learning process;
- *Humor* could be effectively used to take students' fancy by some anecdotes or short humorous stories relevant to the content. They are able to improve learning atmosphere and put the learners in "mood";
- *Conflict* usually appears as a highly driving method. Confronting different opinions about the same situation will certainly capture students' imagination;
- *Visual variety* can be successfully used as a dare in e-learning because visual presentations are slightly online available. Purposely chosen graphic design, layout, then images, charts, animations and videos will aesthetically improve course's visual features, what is highly motivating.

Another important factor to improve learning motivation in online courses is **engagement**. To improve learners' engagement means to enhance students' contribution as active participants into the learning. Students become more active when they are emotionally fastened. Touching their emotions makes learners feel more connected and intensifies their individual engagement. The learner-centered and emotionally-driven concepts give learners the opportunity to tie the learning content with its impacts in everyday life. Some of the practices that point out the emotionally stimulated motivation are given below.

- *Storytelling* is an effective e-learning drive considered to the learners' feelings and emotions. It's important to make sure that the story-content is relevant to the learning goal and content and to the specific characteristics of the students (needs, opinions, beliefs, age etc.);
- *Scenarios* might highly increase the motivation for e-learning by appealing on learners' fantasy. Addressing on imagination, these powerful sources of motivation give the children an opportunity to explore the consequences of their learning activities, thus they can see the direct link between the learning content and its real life implications;
- *Simulations* are usually used to show students how the information they are learning can be applied outside of the "improvised" classroom, in the real life. All the knowledge and skills included in the simulations must be relatable to the current learning objectives.

The Keller's ARCS model of motivation points out that **relevance** is established as an important component of e-learning process. The tendency of creating relevant online teaching and learning takes in advance the basic didactical principles. The directions from previous to new knowledge, from concrete to universal, from known to unknown have found their

implication in the creation of the efficient motivating issues. In a sense of this, several strategies tend to improve learners motivation for e-learning.

- E-learning should be relevant if it allows the new knowledge, new abilities and skills to be *connected with the previous experience*, ensuring continuity in learning. Acquiring new skills helps to expand the existent knowledge base. So, learning is constructive process that contributes to self-improvement and encourages learners to come again and to capture new portion of knowledge;
- In situations where the learners are not able to see the importance and usefulness of what they are learning in present or in future, they should be inspired by a *model of success*. Somebody else's positive experiences may influence learners to perceive the learning course as a magnificent chance to personal progress.

The belief that they can succeed in reaching learning goals, helps learners to improve the **confidence** in own capabilities. In fact, knowing that the learner is able to completely accomplish the certain tasks, increases the sense of self-confidence, so the motivation for learning. Speaking to e-learning, it is essential to plan online activities that raise learners' degree of confidence and create positive expectations of success.

- Setting *clear objectives* capable to achieving helps e-learners to canalize and to follow their own learning direction. This means that the learners are aware of what they should exactly know at the end of the course and how they should score it;
- When the learning *content is presented as a structure* learners are allowed see the integrity of learning contents and their mutual correlation. Of course, this should facilitate learning due to increasing learning motivation;
- Giving *small portion of knowledge* that are easy acceptable is a strategy that through small, but efficient steps builds learner's progress. This enhances self-confidence and strengths the feeling that the learning process can be seen as a self-growing process;
- *Self-control* over own learning gives e-learners sense of independence. This motivating factor makes learners believe they are responsible for their own learning and their own success;
- Learning should be recognized as a process of personal growth through personal achievements. Empowering learners for online learning by taking in advance their personal competences (process of *personalizing the learning*) will improve their personal engagement and motivation for learning.

One of the most powerful e-learning motivational factor is **satisfaction** of the acquired knowledge quality and quantity. To increase satisfaction means to make learners proud of what they have been learnt during the learning process. A very simple but effective way to magnify satisfaction is to give permanent and constructive feedback. The *feedback* validates weather the learners have reached the goals or they haven't. If the answer is positive, that's a brilliant chance to reward students' efforts. *Awards* are the best stimulants for primary school children, because

they intensify interests and motivation for learning. But, when the feedback answer is not that good, students should be encouraged to learn from their own mistakes to successfully finish the online course.

The feeling of isolation that often occurs among the learners during the e-learning process has been treated as an aspect that decreases motivation for learning. **Social interaction** can fight learners' alienation effectively. Springing up the collaboration with each other and with the teacher, learners will actuate the satisfaction of helping others or overcome the challenge or the feeling that they are not left on their own. Frequently used methods to improve social interaction through social media or social network are *online discussions, group projects, group tasks* etc.

The good motivation is a precondition for successful e-learning. Speaking on primary school students it seems that there is not better initiation for learning than the game. Children love games. That's why the games should be used as educational tools that help students to earn new or to practice already earned knowledge. Also, games could be effectively used as an attention refreshment after a lengthy module.

The concept of motivation is applied to explain moving strength, its direction and intensity, persistence and quality of behavior, especially the one directed to execution of certain aim (Brophy, 2015). It explicates what drives the students, what fuels their pursuit of success and what will make them become active participants in online teaching-learning process.

CONCLUSION

Our educational system is faced to an unexpected and impressive challenge: e-learning into compulsory education. Reaching effective and successful teaching-learning online process among the primary school students is unconceivable without adequate motivation. The motivation is important quality that imbues all aspects of that process. It depends on methods and forms of work, on feelings of students and their attentiveness, attribution and goals.

The motivation for online learning can be used as a weapon to fight learners' procrastination, alienation and frustration. Motivational learning environment is created by enhancing learners' attention, improving students' engagement, establishing relevance of the process, raising learners' self-confidence, stimulating learners' satisfaction and springing up social interaction.

Motivation strategies in e-learning should be recognized early in the process of primary education thus they could be focused to effectively influence the learning approaches enhancement.

REFERENCES

- [1] Китановска, В., (2018), Систематски пристап при методичкото обликување на воспитно-образовната работа, Меѓународна ревија на трудови –Фенестра, четврто издание, Битола: Центар за локални иницијативи;
- [2] Keller , J. (1987). Development and use of the ARCS model of instructional design. *Journal of instructional development*, 10 (3), 2-10.
- [3] Schunk, D., Meece, J., Pintrich, P. (2014). *Motivation in education: Theory, research and applications*. Pearson.
- [4] M. S. A. El-Seoud, I. A. T. F. Taj-Eddin, N. Seddiek, M. M. El-Khouly, and A. Nosseir, “E-Learning and students' motivation: A research study on the effect of e-learning on higher education,” *IJET*, vol. 9, no. 4, 2014.
- [5] Brafi Dz, (2015), *Kako motivisati ucenike da uce (How to motivate students to learn)*, Clio: Beograd