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MOTIVATION TO LEARN DURING A PANDEMIC

PhD Snezana Jovanova-Mitkovska,
Faculty of educational sciences, UGD Stip

PhD Biljana Popeska,
Faculty of educational sciences, UGD Stip

Abstract: The learning process is a process that takes the longest and has the greatest importance in every human's life.. It is a process in which an individual adopts and shape their knowledge, skills, beliefs, attitudes; a process in which individuals shapes their behavior. It is conditioned by the so-called internal motives, as well as by external stimulus that determine the purpose, intensity and duration of the learning process. In the paper we theoretically elaborated the problems related to motivation, its importance in the life of every person, especially the motivation to learn. In the answer of the question: how to motivate students to learn better during the pandemic, in order to achieve higher achievements in the teaching process, improving its quality, we pointed out some motivational techniques.

Key words: teaching, learning, motivation to learn, motivation technique, students

Introduction

We marked 21 centuries as the century filled with numerous challenges which left, visible traces of our existence: wars, globalization, climate change, pandemics ...

The latest pandemic, the pandemic with COVID-19, has caused significant disruptions in life in general: fear, stress, worrying about our own health, the health of the one's we love, fear of existence, fear of the future. The COVID 19 pandemic has brought unimaginable changes in lifestyle, changes in the approach to the performance of daily activities, social distancing, quarantine, police hour.

Pandemic with coronaviruses cause upheaval and in the educational sphere. We faced the phenomenon of closing schools in order to prevent the spread of the virus, and the consequence was, and is, the transfer of learning, from learning and teaching in the classroom to learning and teaching at home.

Both, as teachers and as parents, we faced a number challenges: How and in what way to perform learning at home? What resources to use? Are TV shows, special TV channels, is it through platforms using information and communication technology? Do we have the appropriate infrastructure for easy and fast, access to information and communication technologies and to the Internet?

Are we ready for the realization of online teaching and and in what measure? What kind of support do we need? Do we have the necessary competencies or do we need new ones? Who, where, how to conduct the professional development? How and in what way we

can ensure the quality of the offered teaching content through online resources? What should be the duration of the class? How to provide the necessary motivation for students to learn? etc. Many questions that require urgent responses. Most of the questions were answered in accordance with the current context and the need for fast responses and strategies in the pandemic situation and in case of a pandemic continuation.

The teaching and learning started and was performed through TV shows, every day, in specific terms for specific age groups of students, according to the curricula, by setting up resources on purposefully created websites, holding classes online, using various e-platforms: ZOOM; Microsoft Teams..., communication with students via mobile phones. A combination of more than the above methods was made, in order to overcome the problem with the availability of content, learning resources for each student.

The challenge of being able to perform online teaching was solved through numerous published tutorials, sharing experiences with each other, support from teachers, experts in the field of information, sharing experiences. But is that enough, or do we need something more? It is necessary the time period during summer vacation, be used in the best possible way for professional development of the teaching staff for the implementation of online tools, application of technology in the teaching process, to find various alternative solutions to achieve a successful, quality teaching process.

Parents facing the challenge of being a "substitute teacher", have been asked a host of questions: the lack of resources at home to study online, not having the proper skills to handle information technology, not having the proper education to help their own child in mastering the teaching contents ..

However, interventions were made here as well: constant consultations with teachers, sharing and exchange of experiences in groups created for the exchange of parental experiences, but on the other hand, emphasized the need to organize educational seminars for parents to educate their own children at home, for successful parenting. The quality of the offered online teaching content is not at the enviable level. The limited duration of TV shows, the way of presenting the contents, the lack of opportunities for establishing direct interaction with the students, reflects on the quality of the offer.

The empathetic, two-way verbal communication cannot be replaced easily, the possibility to ask questions, to get answers, to expand and deepen the knowledge. The summer period is an opportunity for interventions, to raise the quality of the offer for online interpretation of teaching content.

However, the students were the one that faced the greatest challenge. Being socially distant, when everything is happening in the circle of the family, learning at home, not having the opportunity to socialize, interacting with classmates and friends, with the teacher, without opportunities for interactive sharing, are only some of the issues that have affected young generations. All this reflected on their motivation to learn and to follow online teaching. In such conditions, the question arose: how to maintain the motivation to learn during a pandemic? Who should be the generator of students' motivation? How to act in order to keep young people to be motivated and positive?

Motivation, motivation in the teaching process

One of the key issues that is always important and arises in all areas of work including education is the issue of motivation – personal motivation and motivation of others around us. This issue gains its importance during the pandemic situation.

What exactly is the motivation?

Motivation is the driving force that leads us on the path to achieving goals, meeting needs. According to Brophy, Jere (2010), motivation is what all a person will do to act, according to a purpose and to persevere in that action. Motives are the initiators which are hypothetical constructs that explain why someone do the thing that they do, and differs from the immediate goals and strategies for reaching them. The motive may be curiosity, satisfaction with the activity or interest in the content. As a driving force that drives the individual forward, motivation is actually a symbiosis of the individual's intellectual and physical capacities, such a symbiosis that motivates the individual to act, which can have different intensity, acting with different duration aimed at achieving a predetermined goal. The overall process of motivation is the construction of several elements, as Nikolic, M (2013:11) will point out:

1. Need - state of psychological and physiological disbalance/tension that seeks to be satisfied;
2. Movement - action taken to overcome tension;
3. Reward - an achievement that removes tension.

Exactly, the desire to achieve something, to succeed, is the one that drives us forward. The three mention components of motivation refer to motivation in general, including teaching motivation and is aimed to ensure a quality teaching process.

The main task of each educational system is to enable each student to be educated according to his / her abilities, to enable him / her to develop their own potential to the maximum level. The development of the student's potentials is conditioned by motivation for learning. Learning motivation depends on a several factors such as: the student's psycho-physical structure, the characteristics of the teacher, the characteristics of the teaching content, the applied teaching technology, the social environment. Without immediate motivation for learning, there is no quality educational process. Students who are not equal but are different from each other are involved in the educational process. They differ in gender, skin color, ethnicity, religion. They differ based on predispositions, perceptions, prerequisites, beliefs, skills, attitudes, expectations ...

If we consider one of the most famous theories of motivation, Maslow's theory, which dates back a long time ago, from 1943, there are five types of needs organized hierarchically as: basic biological needs, need for security, need for affiliation, need for respect, need for self-actualization, and according to which meeting the needs of the lower levels is a condition for meeting the needs of the higher levels, then a condition for motivating students to learn would be to meet the needs of the lower levels of the Maslow's pyramid of needs.

Assuming that the needs of the lower levels are met, we put the question: how to achieve the motivation for students learning, how to encourage them for their active participation in the teaching process, with what kind of motivation to start? The answer is seemingly simple. Each of us will agree, that we can do this by implementing activities that will attract their interest, which will arouse curiosity, which will activate the younger generations for further learning. But, which are those activities? What motivators do we need in the teaching process?

We need the so-called *internal stimulus*, ie motives, or *external stimulus* that will determine the direction, intensity, and duration of learning. In fact, it is about initiating the so-called intrinsic, intriguing motivation that a person has independently determined, based on justified reasons, goals he wants to achieve and acts in the direction of achieving them. So, the initiator of the initiative is the student's personality, so the realization of the overall activity is interwoven with a sense of satisfaction. This motivation is based on the belief "I want to do it"

Extrinsic external motivation always has in mind the external consequence, ie. students are encouraged by some methods such as grades, commendations, awards, etc. This motivation is based on the motto "I have to do it." In that sense, the most common motives for students are the high grades, the prestige they will have in the class, the status of the stars in the class, the approximate relationship with the teachers. The activity lasts as long as there is support, After stopping support the activity is extinguished, and the effects of learning are weaker. Brofi (2010) advises teachers to use combinations of strategies that encourage the development of students' extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. In addition, it is necessary to create a safe, stable learning environment, with clearly defined goals and outcomes; we need materials that will stimulate students' creative thinking, we need appropriate strategies, appropriate motivational techniques that will activate students, we will enable them to improve their inter and intrapersonal skills, we will give them the opportunity to offer new possible solutions, new knowledge. The image and belief in oneself, in one's abilities "I have a clear goal, I will do my best and I can achieve that, I am not afraid of failure"; is one of the most important internal motivators, motivations for the student.

The set goals also have a special importance. Clearly set, measurable, achievable goals lead the student's personality to be aware of the goal in front of her, direct her attention, strengthen her energy, perseverance, on the path to her realization. The goal should have challenging power. It should be set, so that it can be broken down into smaller, more prestigious goals, so as not to lead to student dissatisfaction and lack of motivation at the very beginning of the activity. It should be formulated in such a way, which does not lead to dissatisfaction and unmotivation of the students at the start of the activity.

Creating a stable and secure learning environment is another important element on which learning motivation depends. An environment in which every student feels safe, secure, in which there is a positive interaction and communication in multiple relationships, in an environment of smiling, cheerful, interested, curious, persistent students and teachers, an environment in which there is a positive working atmosphere, in which everyone is valued a student, his work, is a step on the road to success. We agree with Gardner and Morgan's statement (Gardner, 1999; Morgan, 2006) that: "Effective learning depends not only on the methods and forms of work in the teaching process, but also on students' feelings, interests, attribution and goals."

But, the motivation for success in the teaching process depends not only on the student, but of course on the teacher. The most important factors for teacher motivation are: job satisfaction, collegiality, respect, autonomy, professional challenge, working with students, satisfaction when the student progresses and good working conditions.

The first and basic condition is "the love that the teacher has for the child, the student, the person. The enthusiasm of the teacher is also important for motivation in the teaching process. The enthusiastic teacher constantly thinks about what to do, to get the best out of the child, the student, and how to transfer the contents to actively involve students. The teacher is convinced and believes that anyone can succeed.

Empathy, sense of humor, teacher's democratic attitude, positive attitude, trust-filled attitude, respect for each student, objectivity especially in the evaluation process, are also important for achieving motivation in the teaching process. Art in the organization of the teaching process, application and combination of methods, forms, procedures in the teaching process, the application of different strategies in the process of teaching is a step towards strengthening the motivation of student learning. The teacher is the one that will enable the student how to learn, how to find ways of effectively processing information and strategies for developing skills.

By learning students how to learn, it will encourage the learners (student) to actively adopt the teaching contents, it will encourage them to independently understand the importance and value of the knowledge that should be acquired, he will learn about further life. He is the one who, respecting the needs of the students, will work on building a relationship of trust and respect, will support positive relations between the students of his/her class and beyond.

How to maintain motivation to learn during a pandemic?

Online teaching is something completely new for all of us: children, parents, teachers is-. It is something that sometimes scares us, but also something that at the same time can motivate us to be a step forward in the search for new models of teaching and solutions for new approaches in teaching and learning. The implementation of online teaching implies the existence of certain preconditions: possession of digital devices, the ability to handle them, the ability to realize the so-called. programmed teaching, ability to create and implement online content, ability to support and assist parents, colleagues, students ...

Assuming that all these conditions are met, the question arises as to how to maintain the motivation of the student to learn, how to maintain his attention to follow and actively participate in online teaching, ie. what motivational strategies the teacher should apply to maintain motivation.

Motivational strategies include "any activity or content that we can predict that will motivate the student because it complements the interests, needs, values, feelings, experiences, prior knowledge, life goals of the students, and so on." (Konečnik, E., 2002:15, mention at Trskan, D, 2006:26). For both, regular and online teaching, when it comes to maintaining motivation, it would be good to follow a few key rules. That are the follows:

- Providing an organized learning environment Learning tasks must be a challenge, nor too easy, nor too heavy, but to be worth solving;
- To build students self-awareness and positive expectations - is achieved by setting clear, specific and achievable goals;
- To emphasize the value of learning to students, to make teaching tasks related to the needs of students; work activities to follow the interests of students; to connect the new with the old teaching contents, to clarify the connection between current learning and life in the future;
- Teachers should constantly help students stay focused on tasks. Allow students to do their homework regularly. Teach students using a variety of teaching tactics (Woolfolk, A., 2002:373, mention at Trskan D, 2006:24).

The last rule applies precisely to the application of various motivational techniques. The purpose of motivational techniques is actually to stimulate interest, curiosity to acquire knowledge, but also to facilitate the process of adopting the teaching structure. There are various motivational techniques that are divided into: classical, spontaneous, short-term, long-term, introductory, inter-motivational, visual, auditory, kinetic, etc.

There are numerous motivational techniques that can be used in both regular and so-called online teaching, at all stages of the teaching process. The so-called "Energizers" that allow students to relax, create a positive work atmosphere. It would be good to use them whenever the teacher sees a decrease in interest, attention, concentration of students. Example: counting (different variants); Impulse, creating thought sentences with a word, performing various movements using the Brain Break platform (Popeska et al, 2018; Jovanova – Mitkovska & Popeska, 2019).

In the introductory stages it is possible to use a multitude of motivational techniques such as: unusual stimulus questions, questions with an appropriate degree of novelty,

surprise, and unexpected, inconsistent data related to the content that follows, quizzes, associations, rebuses. It would be a good idea to start online classes in such a way that each class has a different student who with the help, support from the teacher, to have designed an interesting "Energizers" to relax the students, to create a more positive learning climate..

Provocative questions, development questions, video presentations, a flood of ideas, audio recordings are just some of the motivational techniques that can be used to connect the old with the new knowledge, preparing for what is to come, which is a goal that wants to be achieved. Maintaining motivation during the presentation of the teaching content, maintaining the student's activity could also be achieved by using the techniques: Stop, prediction tables, provocative questions, optimistic messages, request for performance of various work activities from the student related to the previously presented. Of course, the requirements should be in accordance with the developmental characteristics of the students.

In the final parts of the teaching online lesson, it is possible to apply various motivational techniques such as: rebus, crossword puzzle, performing certain movements, guided fantasies, reports, etc. Music, movement, meditation are also important motivational techniques that can be applied in all stages of the online teaching process, whenever the student and the teacher jointly assess that they can help them to successfully learn, teach.

The application of motivational techniques requires appropriate training of the teacher, who will gradually use and teach his students about their application and at the same time will improve them. Summer vacation is another opportunity to conduct education in this area-motivational techniques.

Conclusion

The biggest challenge for every teacher is to ensure the active participation of the student in the teaching process, to motivate him to learn. Motivation for learning is a driving force that leads the student forward, which activates the creative potentials of the student, awakens the awareness of their own power in achieving the real set, measurable goals. To encourage this driving force of the student, the teacher applies a multitude of motivational techniques aimed at stimulating interest, curiosity to gain knowledge, but also facilitating the process of adopting the teaching structure. The latest pandemic, the COVID 19 pandemic, which has caused significant disruptions in life in general, has also caused changes in education. The introduction of online teaching, as a new challenge faced by students, teachers, parents, put all stakeholders in front of numerous questions. How to perform quality teaching online? How to encourage student activity? How and in which way to have quality, lasting knowledge? How to meet satisfied, fulfilled students, teachers of online teaching? Motivational techniques, the ability to apply them, their innovation, we believe will be one of the solutions that will enable the achievement of quality online teaching.

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