

ASPECTS REGARDING THE CONATIVE SELF-REGULATION IN ACADEMIC LEARNING

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Abstract. *Learning is achieved through a channeled energy intake determined by motivational and emotional structures. The student's ability to control moods, reactions of avoidance or resent towards certain tasks, feelings of frustration, emotional reactions to success or failure, is linked to the ability of self- motivation and perseverance in the learning process. Emotional and motivational control is redounded upon the cognitive capacities and performance. Motivation control in the educational environment entails preparing the learners to take reasonable risks, setting some optimal expectation levels, and gaining self-confidence from an educational vantage point. The study under scrutiny aims at identifying the emotional-motivational status for a given sample made of students. The study involved 70 students of Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine "King Michael I of Romania" in Timisoara. The methods used for the research comprised a questionnaire on learning motivation, a scale for determining anxiety and the Friedmann emotional maturity scale. Corollary to the application of the above-mentioned research tools, the situation within the Faculty of Agriculture, Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine "King Michael I of Romania" in Timisoara was identified, with relevant and realistic recommendation findings for students who want to learn responsibly and autonomously.*

Keywords: *motivational structures, emotional control, motivational control, responsible learning*

INTRODUCTION

Motivation and emotionality are the energetic and directional poles of human activities, including academic learning. Knowing personal beliefs concerning one's own efficacy, emotional responses to one's own performances, self-perception of one's own efficacy on goal reaching are ways of passage to a new level of personal development – that of affective-emotional self-regulation. Self-guided academic learning is the goal of academic education: it is the science of self-motivation for learning. Establishing clear, reachable complex goals determines an increase of the motivation for learning from the perspective of school success. On the other hand, teachers play an important role in motivating students for learning. Intrinsic motivation is one of the most important motivations of academic learning. Besides encouraging intrinsic motivation, we should also encourage motivation based on self-assertion and professional promotion if we need to produce optimum results in higher education (AUSUBEL, ROBINSON, 1981). Self-motivation ability and learning performance are linked to the students' ability of emotionally self-control. They learn to broaden their horizon of knowledge, to improve their skills, and to support their well-being. Deficit of knowledge and skills can cause negative affective states, particularly anxiety. Numerous researches have pointed out the fact that students who have learned emotional self-regulation after failure are capable of developing inner conditions favourable to further learning. They show self-confidence, low level of anxiety before engaging in learning, and ability to make more efforts – all of which results in good grades. (BOKAERTS, MONIQUE, 1995) an affective academic climate should generate a feeling of closure and help students overrun stress successfully using different coping ways.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This descriptive study starts from the hypothesis that motivation for learning in higher education can be improved through the proper knowledge of emotional feed-back, through the identification of affective maturity and of the lack of generalised tendencies to anxiety conditions.

The Motivation for Learning Questionnaire points out information about desires and needs that determine and support learning, as well as motivational milestones that intervene in the development of beliefs, attitudes, and lifestyle of the undergraduates of the Faculty of Agriculture of the Banat’s University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine “King Michael I of Romania” from Timisoara, Romania, enrolled in the course of the Teaching Staff Training Department.

The Friedmann Emotional Maturity Scale measures the level of emotional intelligence. Its scores determine the existence of infantilism or of emotional maturity.

The Penn State Worry Questionnaire is a 16-item instrument developed by MEYER et al. (1990) to measure excessive worry and the generalised and uncontrollable character of worry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As far as the results of applying the Friedmann Emotional Maturity Scale is concerned, the maturity coefficient mean of the group of 70 undergraduates was 18.5, which corresponds to a medium degree of maturation. There was no case of full emotional maturity and no case of emotional infantilism, infantile response, childish response, or immature teenage response: 14.3% of the cases ranged under slight emotional immaturity, 25.7% ranged at the low limit of emotional maturity, 29.5% ranged under medium level of maturity, 22.9% ranged under proper level of maturity, and 7.6% ranged under good emotional maturity (Figure 1).

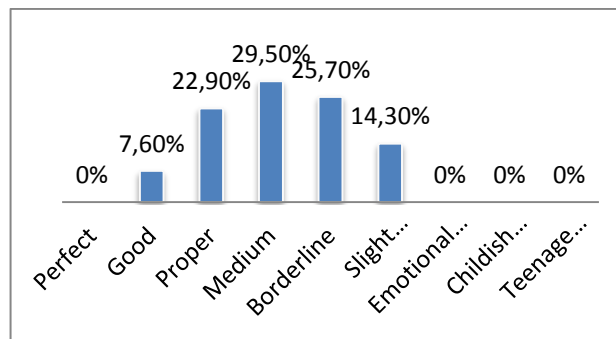


Figure 1. Results of the Friedmann Emotional Maturity Scale

As for the Penn State Worry Questionnaire, the results were the following: the mean of the group we questioned was 43.28 points; 10% of the undergraduates recorded below 30 points, 37% recorded between 30 and 50 points, 41.4% recorded between 50 and 60 points, and 11.6% recorded over 60 points. Results are within normal psychological limits of worry, with no results above 65 points whatsoever (Figure 2).

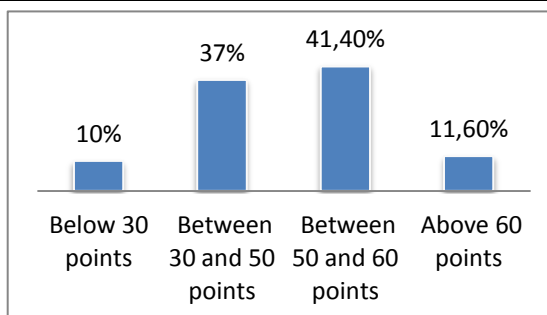


Figure 2. Results of the Penn State Worry Questionnaire

The Motivation for Learning Questionnaire showed that the most important factors influencing students' learning are, in a decreasing order: "success" (68%), "encouragement" (18%), and "approval of family and/or friends" (14%).

The responses to the question "Why do you learn?" were: "to become a good specialist" (42%), "to avoid exam failure" (21.3%), "to know more" (19.5%), and "to humour my parents" (17.2%).

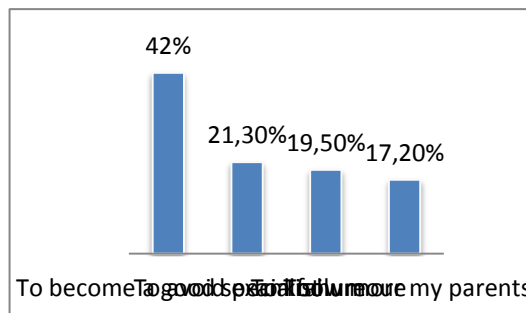


Figure 3. Hierarchy of the reasons for learning

The question "Which of the following needs motivates you to learn more?" obtained the following responses: "the need to acquire abilities and skills", "the need to reach a higher status", "material needs", and "the need to know".

The responses to the question "Which of the following feelings do you experience when you are successful in learning?" were: "personal achievement", "my parents' satisfaction", "joy of having solved a problem", and, at a lesser extent, "approval".

The undergraduates responded to the question "Which of the following factors influence the students' interest in learning?" as follows: "usefulness of the subject", "appealing and interesting lessons", "harmonious relationship between the teachers and the students" and, at a lesser extent, "objective evaluation".

Most undergraduates believe that the attitude of their families towards learning is neither indifferent, nor negative or positive.

The question "Which of the following factors has a negative influence on learning?" produced the following responses: "the teacher-student conflicts", "time pressure", "motivational conflicts", "family conflicts" and "lack of confidence in one's own forces".

The response to the question "Which of the following as a particular influence on school success and on school failure?" is, in most cases, "of pedagogical nature", followed by "personal matters" and "family matters".

The question “What family factors could you motivate to learn better?” got the following responses: “a positive attitude towards learning from the family”, “good material conditions”, and “harmonious family relationships”.

Most undergraduates responded, to the question “Which of the following elements played the most important role in the moulding of personal beliefs and of a life ideal?” as follows: “some outstanding personalities”, “family personalities”, “outstanding teachers”, and “studied subjects”.

CONCLUSIONS

This descriptive study shows that in the researched sample there are students that have the normal maturity for their age: the scores correspond to Gauss’ curve (most students are at teenage or late teenage). The Penn State Worry Questionnaire shows that our students have a certain degree of worry – below the significant threshold of anxious condition (which can point to either a step on the path to affective self-acquisition and emotional self-control or awareness of responsibility towards learning and one’s own life).

The questionnaire concerning students’ motivation shows that pedagogical factors are the most valued for success (with focus on the pragmatic aspect of the information acquired). Intrinsic motivation is surpassed by the motivation based on self-assertiveness and professional promotion for optimum results in learning in higher education. The teacher-student relationship is considered the most important cause having a negative influence on learning, followed by time pressure, while lack of self-confidence ranks last.

We can, therefore, talk of a process of transformation in the students’ psyche on the path to self-control, self-motivation, and emotional self-management.

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