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LEARNING MOTIVATION AND STUDENTS' GOALS IN VOCATIONAL TRAINING SCHOOL

Tanulási motiváció és a tanulók célja a szakiskolákban

Motivacija učenja i ciljevi učenika strukovne škole

1. Motivation

The term *motivation* originates from the Latin verb *movere*, which means to move. Motivational theories are concerned with the direction of behaviour. They attempt to answer questions about what moves individuals toward what activities or tasks (Pintrich, 2003). Psychology attempts to understand and describe human behaviour (Bodnár and Simon, 1997). In this framework, motivation is given increasing attention. Motivation became a popular research theme among researchers.

The term “personal investment” focuses on certain actions taken by persons, and that is where the study of human motivation must begin and end as well as. The metaphor of investment suggests that all persons possess certain resources. In particular, they all have time, a degree of energy, as well as knowledge and skills that they bring to each situation – be it school, the playground, or work. The key-question is when and how individuals invest time, talent, and energy in a certain activity (Maehr and Meyer, 1997:373).

The answer of how individuals can be motivated is relevant not merely to the teachers at schools but also to employers. Teachers are interested in how they can involve their students in the classroom work to a greater extent. Employers would like to know how they could increase their employees’ performance.

Urđan and Schoenfelder (2006) have defined the concept of motivation as a part of psychology as well as a behaviour that influences how individuals choose to invest their time, how much energy they exert in any given task, how they think and feel about the target, how long they persist at the activity.

1.1. Academic motivation

One thing that is most certain about the past as well as the future is the importance of motivation in the practice of education. While sitting in classrooms, talking regularly to teachers, and listening to students, it is clear that something like *motivation* has become, and probably always will remain to be so called the *heart of teaching and learning*. A well-known phenomenon is that the kindergartner, who is so involved in learning to read and write, too quickly becomes the desultory 10-year-old who avoids reading and hates math (Ames, 1990; Maehr and Meyer, 1997).

Learning motivation is a learning activity that implies an inner tension, which mobilises, controls, integrates learning. Motivations vary according to the internal dynamic fuel and the external factors, namely they are based on the cognitive, affective and effective interaction, self-regulating the system of students and their environment (Réthy, 2001).

Teaching takes place in classrooms with twenty-five or more students. At the classroom level, teachers often face children who keep avoiding challenges. It is one of the problems teachers tend to report about (Ames, 1990). Motivation is not a stable trait of the individual. This means that not only students' motivation differs on a large scale, but also that their motivation varies depending on the situation or their connection with the classroom or the school (Linnenbrink and Pintrich, 2002). Motivation is important because it contributes to achievement, but it is also important by itself as an outcome. Teachers have a significant role in enhancing their students' learning motivation. Teachers need to know how this theoretic knowledge relates to the classroom and to their instructional role in the classroom. They also need to know how to rely on this knowledge when dealing with issues that involve motivational concerns and when making instructional decisions. Effective schools and effective teachers are those who develop goals, beliefs, and attitudes in students which maintain a long-term involvement and contribute to a high quality involvement in learning (Ames, 1990).

2. Models of goal orientation

According to Pintrich's (2000a:94) definition, the term: *goal orientation* "is often used to represent the idea that achievement goals are not just simple target goals or more general goals, but represent a general orientation to the task that includes a number of related beliefs about purposes, competence, success, ability, effort, errors, and standards".

Personal goals (or personal goal orientation) refer to the specific goals that individuals strive to reach in achievement contexts. Although there is a wide variety of goals, only two types of goals have been examined by most researchers: *mastery goals* and *performance goals* (Pintrich, 2000a). According to Ames (1992:262) these goals orient students to "developing new skills, trying to understand their work, improving their level of competence, or achieving a sense of mastery based on self-referenced standards". In contrast, performance goals orient students to focus on their ability and self-worth, to determine their ability

with reference to overtaking other students and receiving public recognition for their superior performance (Ames, 1992; Pintrich, 2000b).

Mastery goals represent a concern with developing competence and skills and are usually considered to be correlated with internal norms (i.e., Have I learned it? Have I improved some?). Performance goals represent a concern with demonstrating competence to others by appearing capable or outperforming others. Individuals generally evaluate using interpersonal norms (i.e., Did I do better than other students in the class?). Nowadays, mastery and performance goals are divided into *approach* and *avoidance* components (Pintrich, 2000a). The two types of goal orientation and their approach and avoidance states are included in Table 1.

Table 1: *Mastery and Performance orientations (Pintrich, 2000a:100)*

	Approach state	Avoidance state
Mastery orientation	Focus on mastering task, learning, understanding Use of standards of self-improvement, progress, deep understanding of task	Focus on avoiding misunderstanding, avoiding not learning or not mastering task Use of standards of not being wrong, not doing it incorrectly relative to task
Performance orientation	Focus on being superior, besting others, being the smartest, best at task in comparison to others Use of normative standards such as getting best or highest grades, being top or best performer in class	Focus on avoiding inferiority, not looking stupid or dumb in comparison to others Use of normative standards of not getting the worst grades, being lowest performer in class

The lines in Table 1 reflect two general goals that students might be striving for and represent the mastery and performance goals. Mastery goals (learning, task, task involved) are represented by attempts to improve or promote competence, knowledge, skills. Students can aim at gaining positive judgments of the self by outperforming others as well as trying to avoid looking dumb or incompetent (Pintrich, 2000b).

Mastery-approach goals concern working on exercises to develop skills. They can involve the avoidance the possibility of not meeting high standards. Performance-approach goals include a focus on outperforming other students. They involve a concern with avoiding the demonstration of low ability (Schunk, 2005).

Research has found some positive correlations with mastery goals. When pursuing such goals, students generally persist longer when faced with difficulty, are more willing to attempt difficult or challenging tasks. They are more intrinsically motivated, feel better

about schoolwork and use more deep-level cognitive processing strategies. In contrast, pursuing performance-avoidance goals is usually associated with a negative pattern of motivational beliefs and behaviours. These students are more likely to give up when facing difficult tasks or confront with failure. They use more shallow-level cognitive strategies (like rote memorization). They do usually not seek help, when they need it (*Urđan and Schoenfelder, 2006*).

Students who feel a sense of belonging are more likely to adopt a mastery goal orientation and less likely to choose a performance goal orientation. Endorsing social reasonability goals positively predict the adoption of mastery goals. In contrast, students who focus on developing social relationships and achieving social status usually assist performance goals. The types of tasks used in the classroom can transmit different messages to students regarding the general goal structure of the classroom (*Linnenbrink and Pintrich, 2002*). To encourage mastery goal adoption, it is recommended to use tasks that are meaningful and appropriately challenging (*Ames, 1992*). Furthermore, if teachers use a variety of tasks giving an opportunity for students to choose among them they find it personally interesting, and at the same time it decreases the possibility for social comparison (*Linnenbrink and Pintrich, 2002*). Mastery goals can be promoted by allowing students to have autonomy in the classroom and reducing the authority of the teacher (*Ames, 1992*). For example, giving students a set of exercises and allowing them to choose the order in which they will complete them can provide autonomy of the students and thus encourage mastery goals. Evaluation and recognition are often quite salient to students and play a significant role in setting the “voice” of the classroom since it emphasizes mastery or performance. To promote mastery goal adoption, evaluation should focus on individual improvement. For example, evaluating students on their improvement over several sets of a written assignment can help students to focus on learning rather than on performing better than others perform. Private rather than public recognition of students' efforts and improvement helps to promote a mastery-oriented learning environment (*Linnenbrink and Pintrich, 2002*).

In spite of the fact, that the theoretical background is elaborated, currently the validity of the 2 x 2 model has been questioned by some researchers. Researchers have found that some students may have a difficulty distinguishing between the four goals. Students indicated that they pursue performance goals for a variety of different reasons (e.g., to please parents, to look smart to one's peers or simply because they enjoyed competition). Additional work on the measurement interpretations and predictive validity of goal orientations will be an important direction of future research (*Anderman and Patrick, 2012*).

3. Goal structures

People believe that the classroom learning environment provides a common experience for all students, but children in the same classroom are treated differently and they

have different experiences. Furthermore, they bring different prior experiences with themselves, which may manifest in a teacher-student interaction (Ames, 1992). A mastery goal structure can be created by (1) giving students appropriately challenging and meaningful academic work, (2) evaluating students in such a way that emphasizes and rewards improvement and growth over social comparison and competition, and (3) offering students more opportunities for choice and autonomy in the classroom (Ames, 1992; Urdan and Schoenfelder, 2006).

Phelan, Davidson and Cao (1991) made a research with 54 students studying at four high schools. They examined how students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds navigated between school, home and friends (social contexts). For some students, the values of parents, friends and school were congruent, the social and academic goals complemented each other, they had high motivation and achievement. For other students the transitions across contexts were more difficult, they selected friends who devaluated academic efforts. Students who had to choose between the values promoted by schools (i.e., effort, achievement) and the ones promoted by friends (i.e., devaluing of school) usually voted for friends who devalued academic effort. In the classes where interactions with friends were not allowed, these students failed miserably. In contrast, in the classes where students could collaborate with their friends, these students were highly motivated and achieved high levels. These findings demonstrate that the relationship between social and academic goals can be influenced by teacher practices and policies in the classroom. The potential conflict between social and academic goals can be reduced by not forcing students to choose between the two that is why students must be allowed to complete assignments with friends. When teachers focus merely on independent work and provide few opportunities for students to work together, relatedness needs are difficult to suffice and some students will feel forced to choose between academic work and maintaining social bonds.

4. Introduction to my research

Research on learning motivation is getting an ever-growing space in Hungary, goal orientations approach, however, does not belong to the current research directions. We lack the suitable measuring tool to examine the goal orientations among students learning in vocational training schools and the results of which we could rely on in practice (Fejes, 2015).

4.1. Hypotheses

I suppose that

1. most students orient to performance goals;
2. there is no significant difference between girls and boys who prefer mastery goals;
3. students orientating to mastery goals tend to absent from school less than 10 days a year;

4. students choosing performance goals have more unjustified absence than students possessing mastery goals.

4.2. Method of research

I have developed a questionnaire for the research purposes based on the questionnaire of Fejes (2015) concerning the teaching of maths at elementary school. My questionnaire consists of 24 statements according to the four types of goal orientations. Examples from the statements of the questionnaire are included in Table 2. All used a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (does not agree at all) to 5 (completely agrees). The statements were related to purposes of students at school in general. At the end of the questionnaire, there were three open questions: What they like or dislike happening in the lessons at school, as well as in what circumstances they prefer taking part in the schoolwork.

Table 2: Examples from the statements of the questionnaire

Scales	Items of the questionnaire
Mastery-approaching goals	It is important for me to obtain the most knowledge possible at school.
Mastery-avoiding goals	One of my goals is to avoid knowing less than it would be possible at school.
Performance-approaching goals	My goal at school is to be considered better than my classmates.
Performance-avoiding goals	I want to avoid being thought to be a bad student.

I used a one-step procedure. The questionnaire was filled in by students who were present at school on the day of the record. The sample consisted of students of four classes. They were students learning in 9th and 10th school year in vocational training school. 75 students filled in the questionnaire, 32 boys and 43 girls from the shop assistant, confectioner and cook training. I collected the filled in questionnaires back in two classes, while in the other classes the form-masters did this task.

The data were analysed by SPSS. Reliability of questionnaire: Cronbach- α : 0.746. The obtained results apply merely to the students who participated in the research.

4.3. Results

Out of four goal orientations (mastery-approach, mastery-avoidance, performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals) only two could be examined according to the factor analysis: mastery and performance goals. The results are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

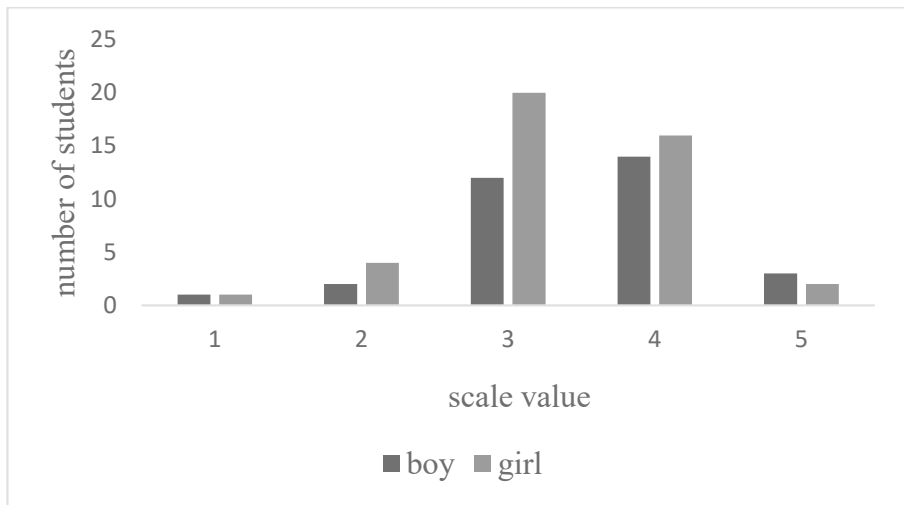


Figure 1: *Mastery goals chosen by students*

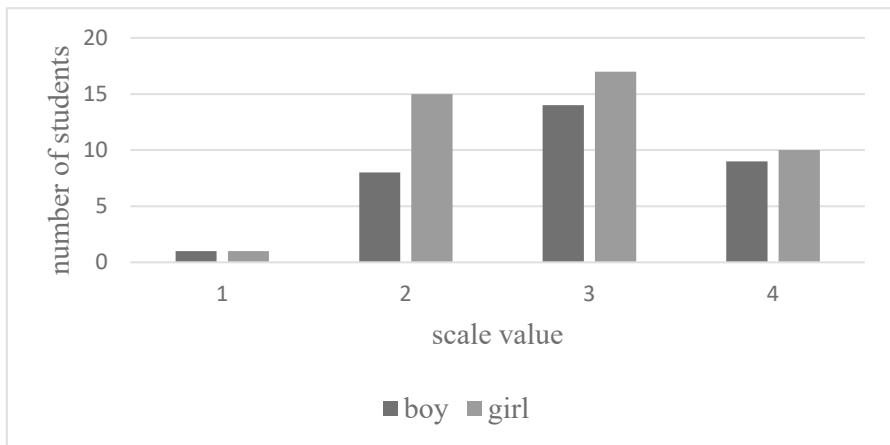


Figure 2: *Performance goals chosen by students*

The factor analysis confirmed what some researchers (*Anderman and Patrick, 2012*) stated, namely that some of the students were not able to distinguish between the 2 x 2 model of the goals.

The analysis of the questionnaire items verifies also the above thesis. 60% of the students indicated that they highly agree with (they indicated 4 or 5 on Likert-scale) the fol-

lowing statement that is a performance-avoiding goal: “I want to avoid being thought to be a bad student”. Half of the students taking part in this research stated that it is important for them to obtain the most knowledge possible at school. Here mastery-approaching goal manifests. Nevertheless, three quarters of these students for whom it is important to obtain new knowledge want to avoid being thought to be bad students. The two different and opposite goal orientations appear in the answers at the same time.

Testing if there are differences concerning which goals have been chosen by which gender it can be stated that there is no significant difference between the choices of girls and boys. There is no correlation between the chosen goals and verified or unjustified absences.

At the open questions about 100 proposals appeared as answers. Students would like “watching films”, “playful exercises”, “silence”, “the teacher explains the material clearly”, “group work”. They dislike “writing much”, “the teacher shouts much”, “there is noise during lessons”, “test”, “using phones is not allowed during lessons” and “a lot of lessons a day”.

Advice for teachers by students concerning the classroom work: “do not make us write too much”, “happier and playful lessons”, “do not shout too much”, “let students talk too”

4.4. Results in the light of hypotheses

1. The hypothesis that most students participating in this research orient to performance goals proved wrong. About half of the students chose the mastery goal items.

2. The second hypothesis proved right; there is no significant difference between girls and boys who prefer mastery goals.

3. The statement that students orientating to mastery goals tend to absent from school less than 10 days a year is not relevant. The relationship between absenteeism and mastery goals cannot be justified.

4. The hypothesis that students choosing performance goals have more unjustified absence than students possessing mastery goals is not relevant. There is no correlation between the chosen goals and verified or unjustified absences.

5. Solution suggestion

The fundamental problem is that when we look into classrooms, we see the same incentive system being used for all the children in the classroom. When we look at the classroom, there are six areas of organization that are easy to handle and involve motivational concerns: task, authority, recognition, grouping, evaluation, and time (*Ames, 1990*).

Teachers play a significant role in contributing to the classroom goal structures through explicit and implicit messages about the purpose of school activities, the role of student as well as norms and rules established for student behaviour. These norms begin from the first days of the school year when teachers introduce and socialize students to their philosophies and beliefs (*Anderman and Patrick, 2012*).

One effective method of verbal persuasion is to help students understand how new exercises are connected to previous tasks at which the students were successful. An available model may help students feel more confident in their abilities to do exercises. Teachers can point to models of students with similar ability (e.g., John was able to complete this assignment; you are able to do it, too. I know you can do it. Teachers have to support students to experience success in learning and let students do exercises together with peers (*Urđan and Schoenfelder, 2006*).

Teachers trying to enhance situational interest should think about how to promote both catch and hold factors. When designing classroom activities, having an exciting experiment in science or using an innovative computer program in social studies may awaken interest and engage in students at that lesson. Teachers should consider how to promote the hold factor of situational interest, such as trying to make the topic meaningful to students. Teachers must capitalize on the utility of what is being learned (e.g., helping students see that the material is useful outside of school or for future goals) (*Linnenbrink and Pintrich, 2002*).

6. Future directions and trends

Although a great deal of research tends towards motivation of students, there is clear need for additional research.

One of the further fields is to examine how specific features of the classroom environment might effect students' motivation. Classroom observations by researchers can lead to further useful results that can be operated in the everyday practice in the classroom.

It is important to examine how motivation of students changes when moving from elementary schools into middle schools (*Anderman and Patrick, 2012*)

A questionnaire for mastery and performance goals with direction approach and avoidance should be developed. It should be suitable to measure the different types of students' motivation.

7. Conclusion

Motivation as an outcome is important to all students in the classroom all the time. Motivated behaviour at school results from a combination of the students' situational characteristics. An "unmotivated" student can become a willing participant in academic tasks if the tasks are tailored to his/her interests or students get the opportunity to satisfy social needs by working with friends on the task. Teachers can directly enhance student motivation by controllable factors, such as teaching style, curricula, and school or classroom policies (*Urđan and Schoenfelder, 2006*).

Most of the studies reveal that teachers must have or usually have a great deal of methodological repertoire. This study offers also methods for teachers how the students' mo-

tivation can be enhanced. Most of them are really useful but we have not dealt with the problems students face in their private life. It can be hunger (he/she could not eat that day), poverty (there is no money to buy a new boots in winter because the old ones' soles peeled off), constant quarrels in the family, and the line can be continued. If these problems were solved, the teachers' tasks would be easier and they would be able to enhance the motivation of students studying at vocational training schools. It is the interest of both the school and society to produce well-trained, mentally and physically healthy persons in schools.

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