

## Development of Students' Educational Motivation on the Back of Labor Market Requirements

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**Abstract.** *The article focuses on motivating non-linguistic students for foreign language study. The authors consider current labor market requirements as the key trigger for motivation. Special attention is paid to the importance of students' emotional involvement in the process of study while developing professional skills. The authors also note that a crucial role in motivation is played by such factors as family, peer support, society and the need for self-actualization.*

**Procedures and methods of research:** *the authors made observations of 1-3 year students of RUDN Economic Department in the course of foreign language classes. Some conclusions were drawn on the basis of students' answers while discussing career-oriented topics.*

**The outcomes:** *the authors have come to the conclusion that motivation for foreign language study at non-linguistic universities is developed under the influence of such factors as striving for social and professional establishment.*

**Practical significance:** *it is necessary to take into account the importance of the role of motivation in order to enhance effective foreign language teaching to non-linguistic students*

**Key words:** *professional skills, labor market, academic progress, educational motivation*

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### I. Introduction

Modern Russian higher education system has recently been facing the need for implementing new educational standards which set new requirements and tasks both for faculty and students. Firstly, one should pay special attention to the importance of personal development as well as developing intending specialists' communication skills, their future professional activity being directly related to their further success and competitiveness on the international labor market. In particular, university lecturers and tutors have been using a great variety of methods and techniques for improving students' foreign language skills, forms of control and ways of developing students' motivation for studying foreign languages. Unfortunately, today we can hardly note that the level of economic specialty students' foreign language skills fully corresponds to the requirements set by Federal State Educational Standard.

It is true to admit that a key requirement of today's employer is foreign language fluency as international cooperation has expanded national borders and communication prospects. Consequently, the image of an educated and successful global village member is hardly possible without their being fluent in foreign language. Moreover, it is not just a matter of summary knowledge in grammar, vocabulary and stylistics of a particular foreign language. It is also a matter of mastering a complex of rhetoric devices, communication strategies and tactics used to influence the partner in order to successfully solve the tasks of cross-cultural professional interaction<sup>1,2</sup>.

Modern Russian students are a specific formation in pedagogical and psychological sense, due to their natural hardships related to positioning in society. The process of developing students' motivation for achievement in studies is often aggravated by losing interest for study and background societal negativity. As well as that, despite the growing number of opportunities for study with advanced technologies, achievement motivation is blocked by unbalances in students' cognitive sphere development and, in some cases, their psycho-emotional immaturity as opposed to the requirements of educational environment and, later, the requirements of labor market.

In the framework of Russian reality, it is often the student's family that hardly recognizes its role in education and is, therefore, incapable of participating in motivating the student for study. Thus, innovative educational strategies should be aimed at maintaining achievement motivation in a mode which would promote the student's psychological stability. This, in its turn, will largely determine effective perception and understanding of curriculum<sup>4</sup>. A number of scientific schools have been working on cutting edge strategies for achievement motivation development.

This heightened awareness in scientific circles may be explained by the fact that early motivation determines the quality of labor resources and life within a country and in terms of an individual – their self-actualization and psychological well-being. These tasks are universal by nature, which has been confirmed by recent studies. Thus, an international group of researchers from universities of the Netherlands, Serbia and Croatia (L. Andrea, T. Peetsma, A. Van Vianen) has concluded that the processes underlying students' motivation for educational and career achievement are identical in countries with different cultural, historic and socio-economic system<sup>6</sup>.

Nevertheless, as the authors observe, young people from states with more political and economic instability may develop more motivation for finding solutions with fewer losses. They are apt to consider their future more responsibly maintaining the willingness to achieve professional and career goals. Yet, despite this logic, the authors recognize its hypothetical character due to some other existing opinions: a) in stable socio-economic systems, students have better career prospects and are more motivated for achieving educational and career goals than their peers in turbulent socio-economic conditions; b) within the variety of socio-economic and cultural traditions, there may be similar levels of involvement in certain goals (making effort to achieve them) but different levels of their dissociation (being remote from unreachable career prospects). The aim of this study is to reveal trends in modern Russian students' educational motivation development.

## **II. Material and Methods**

A good example of educational motivation at the public level is the national program *STEM education movement* (the USA). The program represents targeted development of interest in specific educational values, i.e. particular areas of knowledge: general literacy and admittedly relevant specialties abbreviated as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics). De Leon L. Gray (South Carolina University) formulated the key idea of this achievement motivation strategy: the more students value STEM education, the more likely they will voluntarily master disciplines vital for economic well-being and national security<sup>7</sup>.

A driving factor of achievement motivation for students is academic progress. Not only does it satisfy students' social need for self-identification, differentiation and assimilation in micro-community but also enhances career prospects. D. L. Gray argues that the need for social self-actualization has hardly been discussed by educational psychologists. At the same time, academic progress is a means of self-expression for students who aim to stand out or a way to express belonging to peer group for students who aim to be part of their educational space. Academic progress directly depends on using students' own resources for task fulfillment and their awareness of the connection between mastering educational material and its social value. Tutors, in their turn, may contribute to students' motivation for success by revealing social and employment prospects assumed by studying a particular subject while corresponding to students' natural abilities and interests.

Thus, educational process crates motivational climate: students do not perceive studies as mechanic knowledge assimilation while the tutor's task is to present educational process as a structure of goals. Admittedly, a structure of goals in educational process contributes to students' "social comparison" though it is not clear if this comparison is positive or negative. Moreover, motivation for classroom activity (making notes, answering questions, teamwork, doing tests) is far from stable and may differ from task to task.

According to Gray, the theoretical basis for goal strategy concept is formed by Expectancy Value Theory and Optimal Distinctiveness Theory. He used his assumptions in a detailed analysis of SOFT educational constructor, SOFT standing for Standing Out While Fitting In<sup>7</sup>. His empiric longitude research of the problem-solving process by senior year students confirmed the interdependence of the personality and motivation. Simultaneously satisfying their need to stand out and fit in, students realize adaptive models of achieving success, and thus they strengthen their personal position in the group of their co-students. These processes can be considered as the development of psychological adaptive skill. Adaptive models of achieving the goal with the help of motivational trigger are offered by other scientists in their independent works. SOFT educational constructor demonstrates the meaning of the identity. Accepting other opinions, Gray postulates that "distinctiveness" as a natural wish of a personality should be approved and supported in the educational environment which is "socially inclusive, emotionally safe and motivating." In other words, self-identification of a leaner is the source of his motivation for achievement.

Gray's analysis has also been considered and discussed by faculty members of the University of Potsdam, Helsinki, Jyvaskyla, the University of Eastern Finland<sup>12</sup>. This international group, referring to the analysis of longitude for the third-year students aged 19-20, have offered their own concept of psychological mechanisms of motivation for achievement, defining motivation as readiness to switch from educational environment to professional, and as a result, to achieve educational goals more efficiently. This readiness means self-efficiency and an "injection against failures"; consequently, the motivational stimulus is the student's self-confidence, their belief that the target has been chosen appropriately and psychological flexibility. The authors state that they have applied the concept of a human adaptation to life changes (switching from educational

activity to work) to the educational content in an institute with the use of individual resources of self-efficiency. The authors also use such term as academic buoyancy and energetic resource for overcoming difficulties and developing self-efficiency. If the student has obtained these qualities, academic motivation is developed much more successfully. The authors argue that targeting professional orientation of a learner as well as his self-efficiency is a motivational variable in the model which demonstrates the role of self-motivation via achieving the goals on the example of a conditional switch from the educational stage to the professional one<sup>3</sup>.

Thus, in terms of teaching a foreign language for professional communication it is worth mentioning that teachers of foreign languages have a good opportunity to create a motivational environment, applying to communicative tasks such as cases, discussion clubs, presentations. Discussing and analyzing cases which refer to their professional sphere, students have a perfect opportunity to demonstrate their linguistic skills and to put their professional knowledge and skills in practice. Students also acquire skills, knowledge, a set of values and social capital, necessary for a successful switch to professional activity, being involved in the social activity of the university. The ability to overcome obstacles, good performance in their senior year studies and efficient involvement in the social life depend on the motivational context. The authors believe that the principle aim of foreign language teachers who work with junior courses students is to convince them to take an optional course of a foreign language that envisages more academic hours of language studies and thus makes it possible to obtain its better knowledge. Consequently, the quality of "friendship nets" is considered as the factor that promotes motivation of educational achievements.

It is also worth mentioning that good academic performance is challenging as it is necessary to keep up with the achieved results on the permanent basis which leads to more concern about the future and possible inability to meet the demands of the more and more competitive labor market. Motivated learners strive to preserve their image thus being under the constant pressure of the academic high standards suffer psychological discomfort that results in a high rate of burnout among students. They look for support among peers with the same rate of emotional engagement, but such contacts can have both good and bad consequences for the learner. Motivational personality of a senior year student is well demonstrated in environment created artificially. Thus, a great demand for proper academic qualification is a powerful psychological resource of resistance ability. It is also an effective motivational educational trigger for disabled students. Though, specialists of Harvard Medical College Loren I. Wisk and Elissa Vitsman stress the fact that students with health problems, being incapable of meeting the same targets as their healthier peers, may experience even more concern about their professional future<sup>15</sup>.

Getting back to self-efficacy as motivational predictor of academic progress, it would be worth mentioning international research conducted by S. Roy, M. Morton and Shr. Bhattacharya (University of Chicago; World Bank New Delhi; London Royal College). In the context of women's education in India, the authors empirically confirmed that self-efficacy as a hidden form of human capital is a key correlative for students' educational and career aspirations<sup>10</sup>.

At the same time, as soon as educational aspiration drops, the self-efficacy factor loses its force. As for the achievement motivation problem, one should note the latest adjoining research with the leading topic of students' adaptation to educational environment. Thus, the Belgian research group of Leuven Catholic University (M. Engels, K. Van Liuwen) during long term work with students conducted a study of their education engagement trajectories as related to factors of their status among peers – likeability and popularity<sup>11</sup>.

The study revealed that students liked by their peers were more engaged in university life, showed more activity in class and openly demonstrated positive emotions – interest, joy and enthusiasm. This corresponds to the opinion that likeability is closely related to high self-esteem which, in its turn, promotes initiative and involvement in university life, consolidates the feeling of belonging to micro-community and adds confidence in professional self-actualization.

As opposed to likeability, popularity is not related to engagement dynamics. High popularity level may be considered as a predictor of a drop in effort and concentration in study as well as an increase in passive attitude, abstraction and unpreparedness. The authors assume that it is educational institutions where students begin to build their reputation and demonstrate the corresponding behavior.

Therefore, situations may arise when those enjoying more popularity among peers demonstrate low behavioral engagement and deliberately expressed contempt (unfriendliness, dislike) in order to rise their popularity status. Sometimes popular students happen to choose "more detached" friends and are hardly engaged in university life. The study also revealed that involvement in social life is affected by students' aggressive, unfriendly behavior. As well as that, there may be gradual decrease in behavioral and emotional engagement in educational process (a drop in enthusiasm and enjoyment), which is substituted for by hidden aggression, unpreparedness and passive attitude in class.

Such behavior may be mostly explained by realities of current Russian labor market. of companies look for experienced employees. In order to meet these requirements, a lot of students have to start a career during their third year of study. Therefore, their priorities shift from educational towards career, which is followed by a drop in positive emotions related to educational environment. That is, studies become oppressive

and burdensome. As a result, searching information for task fulfillment is ousted by unconstructive behavior and distracts from achieving a more relevant goal. There appears a conflict of motivations – the one for tool mastering and that of social interaction<sup>11</sup>.

Due to this, it is worth mentioning the need to use advanced technologies, including digital, in the process of training students. These would be tailored to students' need to obtain abilities and skills most required on the labor market today. Our recent observations of RUDN Economic Department students have revealed frequent uncertainty about educational goals among first and second year students which requires a well-considered approach to their motivation. As a rule, students make their career choices or important decisions about further professional activity a year or two before graduation. Consequently, any risks of uncertain educational goals are to be cushioned by emotional engagement in professional spheres. Thus, the university may both maintain and sap students' desires to complete their education.

Apart from its practical orientation, this study binds two characteristics of professional training period – an ability to see the prospects for one's education and self-actualization in the form of emotional engagement. The attention of many researchers has been drawn by some other aspects of motivating students for academic progress. Foreign students' motivation is also a point to focus on. The problems of in-house university climate and foreigners' adaptation culture have been highlighted in both Russian and foreign publications devoted to higher education.

Another recent research trend is anti-motivation for educational goals achievement. A joint study conducted by specialists from New York University in Shanghai, Bournemouth University (Great Britain) and Taiwan National university was devoted to students' romantic relations. It was the first attempt to establish the interconnection between romance and academic progress on the back of patriarchal traditions common, among others, in Russia. Students' romantic relations are viewed by tutors as a distracting factor<sup>9</sup>.

Some specialists offer educational institutions their techniques of motivating students with rigid thinking and poor academic progress. These techniques are based on a different understanding of insistence and consistent change of the student's perception of their repeating effort to master learning material. Finally, there are subjective psychological obstacles preventing the tutor from motivating the student for academic progress.

### **III. Conclusions**

Currently, it is the Finnish scientific school that leads the research of motivation processes responsible for professional training and opportunities for their management. The most recent trend in this sphere is developing concepts of stimulating and supportive motivational climate in education.

Aspirations for professional self-actualization, self-regulation and emotional engagement in education are considered as triggers for achievement motivation. Russian psychologists and educationists have been greatly interested in foreign research of educational motivation as its various aspects have traditionally been studied and practically applied in Russian educational institutions.

Particularly interesting are modern studies devoted to specific types and factors of educational motivation mentioned in this article. Specifically, achievement motivation research, correlation of internal and external motivation, educational motivation as linked to modern labor marker requirements, various socio-cultural and psychological problems of educational motivation.

Equally relevant are such issues as today's students' prospects which depend on a wide socio-cultural context of personality development and how motivation is related to the student's in-house status and popularity among peers. Thus, certain conclusions may be drawn about a common international research field for educational motivation. Therefore, one can observe both common patterns of educational motives development and functioning and those specifics determined by a certain socio-cultural context.

A high priority task of professional training is to develop students' ability to learn and improve their knowledge and skills during life. A successful modern labor market player has to be able to solve problems, cooperate and work in a team using different approaches in their professional activity. Due to this, there is a need to review professional training methods as those have to be oriented on independent search and professional task solutions.

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