Educational Motivation Through the Prism of Practical Experience

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Abstract - **In the present study, the topic of educational motivation among students majoring in "Tourism" at "St. Cyril and St. Methodius" University of Veliko Tarnovo. For this purpose, a survey was conducted among participants in the "Get to know Bulgaria with us" educational project. The article aims to establish the educational motivation of tourism students through their participation in the mentioned project. A survey method and the method for the discovery of association rules to search for regularities based on received data were used. The results of the research conducted among the participants show that students who share the purpose of the project find a way to get involved in it and work to achieve its main goal. As an important part of their academic performance, they share in improving their communication, teamwork and adaptability. The basis of their motivation is the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences, and on a personal level, they share the positive impact of the project on their self-evaluation. Enhancing the institution's image also scores high among the reasons. In summary, we can determine that educational motivation among tourism students is closely dependent on their attitudes towards future development. The development presents specific conclusions based on the data obtained.**

Keywords - **Educational motivation, project, tourism, students.**

1. Introduction

Educational motivation is a specific type of motivation that aims to form knowledge and skills of the individual. It leads to many positive outcomes such as increased personal resilience, improved productivity, creativity, and innovation. Educational motivation is influenced by different subjects and objects involved in the process. It is internal and external and is impacted by individual and group factors. Intrinsic motivation is associated with the individual desires especially if a person wants to achieve certain goals in order to improve its inner world without the intervention of the material inherent in the external. Unlike intrinsic motivation, external motivation is relevant to the incentives that surround the individual and affect him. Receiving rewards and benefits is external stimuli that affect a person and his/her desire to achieve the set goals. Both types of motivation can exist simultaneously. Educationally, each of them brings certain benefits and is often associated with desire, purpose, and realization for the subject.

Motivation is a certain motive, a reason for an action and the achievement of certain goals. In order to be considered in detail, it is important to establish the specific motives that affect the student, and in this paper we consider mainly factors influencing the motivation for education, based on the results of the specific study among students.

The article supports the hypothesis that educational motivation is purposeful in nature and leads to an increase in engagement, creativity, knowledge, competencies, as well as provokes interests, develops talents, and increases self-evaluation.

The aim of this paper is to establish the educational motivation of tourism students through their participation in an educational project.

The tasks are related to tracking several key issues about student participation in the project and its importance for their motivation.

To achieve this goal, the inquiry method with questions of open and closed type is used.

They aim to achieve quantitative and qualitative results, which are analyzed in each direction studied. The method for the detection of associative rules for the detection of regularities based on the data obtained is also used.

2. Methodology

Motivation in higher education (academic motivation) is mainly associated with the personal desire for development and purposeful actions to increase knowledge and skills in a particular field of activity. By choosing a particular specialty and field for professional realization, students determine their own direction for professional development based on conscious choice. As reasons for this choice, we define three main groups:

First group: personal qualities (personal characteristics developed in secondary education: the relationship between secondary and higher education based on the individual characteristics);

Second group: socio-economic factors (social status and significance of the profession);

Third group: academic environment (features, conditions, and attitudes).

The first group is individual and specific because it has to do with the qualities of affect, skills and individual characteristics of learning. To a large extent, it is about the psychological features of a person, which create a desire for a specific professional realization according to the abilities (innate and acquired). The educational process and motivation in a school environment is of key importance for the future development of the student. The in-depth study of certain groups of disciplines leads to the formation of specific interests and the development of cognitive activities. Where the individual feels best, it is associated with his level of performance, and often in this direction moves his interest in future professional development and choice of specialty in higher education. The topic of the role of teachers is important and indisputable and has its influence and reflection on the perception of a subject as attractive or not. Both home education and the school environment lead to the formation of attitudes and desires in the student. The relationship between secondary and higher education is an identification of personal qualities, knowledge, skills, acquired competencies and aspiration for future professional development, and this relationship is transformed from school to academic motivation in order to further develop and make the educational subject successful and realized in the desired professional field.

The second group of factors, namely socio-economic ones, are directly related to the societal role of the chosen profession.

Already at an early age, children unconsciously, most often through their parents and relatives, begin to imitate professions that are socially significant and liked. This interest may have development and real applicability, but in other cases, it is changed by the previous listed factors in the first group, namely personal qualities.

The third group of factors is mainly in the focus of this paper. The academic environment, with its peculiarities, influences the expectations and attitudes of learners who are to make decisions in the future [1]. Very often, building a smooth transition from the school to the academic environment is a key factor for the motivation of future students. Some of the students find their place without difficulties and enter the university rhythm without problems. Others hesitate, but leave tolerance for a final decision, and still others give up or change their specialty. In this regard, university lecturers play a key role in forming and retaining academic motivation among young people. Their task is difficult, precisely because of the differences in students' expectations. An additional difficulty is created in the interdisciplinary specialties, such as the specialty "Tourism", namely to cover students with different interests and preferences. The specific specialty provides an opportunity for development in several scientific and professional fields such as economics, management, geography, etc., which form its specificity, but also require the application of approaches involving individual work with young people in order to better get to know them in order to be motivated by the right methods and means.

Returning to the main theme of learning motivation, the authors define it as a unifying form of different groups of factors that influence the individual throughout the time and stages of learning. This type of motivation is unstable from the point of view of the environment and the accompanying changes, and requires continuous action to maintain and develop it.

According to some authors, personal motivation is a decisive factor in the effectiveness of students in the learning process [2]. Study of academic motivation is important for the improvement of many aspects of training and professional development. According to the theory of generations, each generation, depending on the specific national psychology, political, and economic events in the geographical areas in which it is formed, has its own values, behaviors and requirements [3]. Current students belong mainly to the z generation and carry the specifics of their time, which is evident from the presented research. According to one of the most popular classifications, that of McCrindle, they were born between 1995 and 2009 [4].

With the emergence of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the educational process in secondary and higher education institutions in Bulgaria underwent a change that included a transition from face-to-face form of education to one with remote access in an electronic environment. Tourism education is known for its practical orientation and accordingly there was a transformation and an attempt to adapt by developing new models and forms of education with a view to better interpretation and simulation of practical activity. It is important for higher education to develop and enhance the practical orientation of the learning process [5]. That is why the relationship between education and business is also significant. It raises the level of the educational product, makes it more attractive and suitable for future students, adequate according to the criteria of the current market demand for educational products in tourism [6]. It is necessary to apply new methods in education, new disciplines, and new qualified teachers in tourism to prepare future managers [7]. Statev [8] points out that the academic education of young people has a key role in the process of transformation of tourism, which is expected even more noticeably after the global COVID-19 pandemic, and their proper motivation is important for this evolution of tourism.

In this regard, an educational project "Know Bulgaria with us" was created, which has three editions [9]. From a teaching point of view, this project is an attempt to stimulate some of the students who love to travel, to share their experience, and to take original photos (a mandatory condition in the project). Their participation also aims to acquire new knowledge, practical experience, the opportunity for easier realization on the labor market, through the accumulation of experience, etc. These goals are directly related to the educational motivation of students.

3. Results

Cognitive motivation and motivation to achieve success are part of educational motivation. Stimulating them directly contributes to increasing the effectiveness of the educational activity and for this reason they are the basis of the survey questions in the study [10]. The basis of this study is the educational project "Know Bulgaria with us", developed by lecturers of the Tourism Department and implemented jointly with students from the specialty "Tourism" at the Faculty of Economics at the University of Veliko Tarnovo.

The project gained popularity and wide coverage in regional and national media. 20 students take part in the project, and most of the participants present their work in all three guidebooks. The survey involved 17 students (85%).

The purpose of the survey is to establish the motives for the participation of students and their educational motivation.

As some restrictive conditions of the study, the following may be indicated:
- The project under consideration is being developed entirely in an online environment;
- Only students from the University of Veliko Tarnovo participate – specialty "Tourism";
- The study group of participants belonged to generation z.

3.1. Results of the Questionnaire Survey

The questions in the survey carry quantitative and qualitative values.

The first question is an open answer and looks for the reasons that provoked students to participate in the project. Ten of them answer that they have joined to promote the little-known places in Bulgaria and thus make them more recognizable and visited. Four point out that for them this project is an opportunity to make closer contact with teachers, new acquaintances with colleagues, and personal development. Two of the students see an opportunity to present their photos, because they define photography as their passion. It is noteworthy that the most common answer to the question is related to the main objective of the project, namely: presentation of tourist sites in Bulgaria that have potential for development in tourism. With these answers, the participants reinforce one of the characteristics of generation z, to which they belong, namely paying particular attention to global and local socio-economic, environmental, sports, and cultural events [11]. Participation of students in the photo guide shows their attitude towards common causes. Representatives of generation z feel the need to believe that they are working for a useful cause and bind their desires and values to the goals of the organization. This is important to them because it inspires them and makes them feel useful.

It is also important to identify the specific benefits for the project participants as they understand and define them. It is the second question that is aimed at establishing these personal benefits for students (Fig. 1)
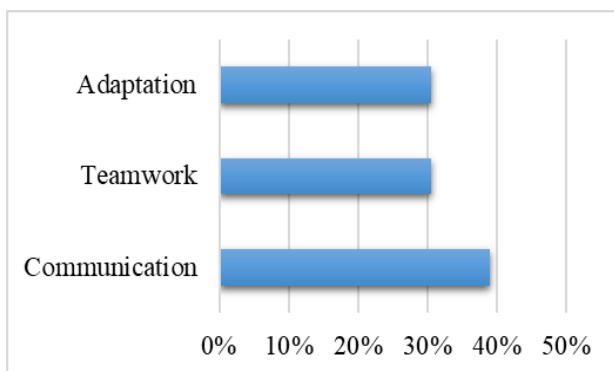
Figure 1. Answers to the question "What did you improve with your participation in the project?"

Most of the participants (39%) determined that their participation in the project had improved their communication abilities, and teamwork and adaptability were placed next with 30.5%. There is not a single answer in favor of the quality "leadership" that was a possible choice, and this fact is not surprising. This is the generation that does not approve of the authoritarian style of government, in which there is a pronounced leader and subordinates. They accept their supervisors/teachers as mentors and leaders in an activity. They participate in the development of ideas and the achievement of goals together in a team. The role of the teachers in the project was mainly guiding and encouraging in order to achieve the objectives of the project.

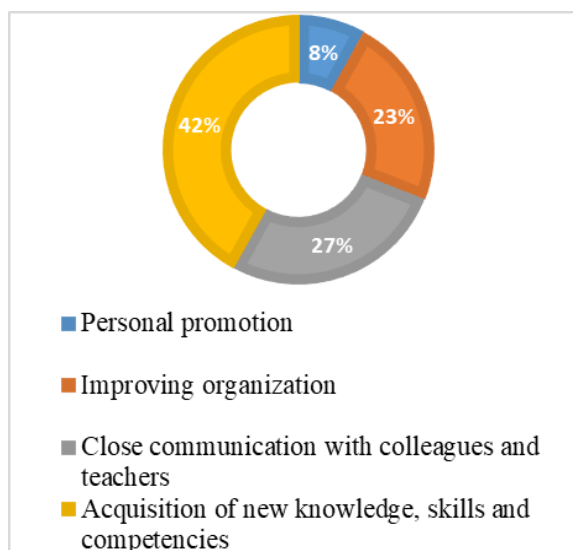The third question reveals the influence of the project in an educational aspect (Fig. 2).

Figure 2. Answers to the question: "What did your participation in the project lead to in educational terms?"

It clearly shows that the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies brings the highest level of influence among participants (42%). Communication with colleagues and teachers ranks second with 27% and improving organization takes third place with 23%. Personal promotion (8%) is not identified as an essential factor for participants. They are aware that if they have the right mentor who is understanding, open-minded, tolerant, and inspiring they can together achieve much higher results, even than the set ones. This happens with good communication and goals to develop personally and professionally the person.

The fourth question concerns the level of student satisfaction. From the answers it becomes clear that 84% have the highest level of satisfaction, with a high and medium degree receiving 8% approval from the participants. There is not a single negative assessment among the respondents. The reasons for this satisfaction can be sought in the clearly set goals. When they are SMART, they do not mislead and lead to very concrete results, and hence to a high degree of satisfaction. Young people do not want to be fooled, they have good judgment, very often without having experienced real situations. Electronic games are their world to a large extent, and the rules in them form part of their personality characteristics. They are not extreme and intolerant of mistakes, they know that both in games and in life, a second chance should be given. But they are critical and intolerant of delusions, inflexibility, and limited thinking – characteristics of generation.

The fifth question has an open answer and is aimed at the acquired competence in the field of tourism. The answers mainly concern the new knowledge of the participants. According to them, through their participation in the creation of the guidebook, they have read and learned a lot of new information about tourist places in Bulgaria. Interesting is the answer of one of the participants, who shares that he got to know the city better, in which he lives, and another says that through his participation he has understood how such a project is organized and structured. Two of the participants were invited to an interview by a Bulgarian media to tell about the sites they have presented. They determine that with this interview they have overcome their concern to speak in front of the camera and media. With this action, they show that they are ready to step out of their comfort zone to achieve even better results related to the promotion of the project. Personal comfort is neglected for the sake of the common good.

The sixth question is related to the self-evaluation of the participants: "Do you think that the promotion of the project, respectively yours, has had a positive impact on your self-evaluation?" The answers make it very clear that 85% of the participants believe that their participation in the project has had a positive impact on their self-evaluation. There is not a single negative answer. High self-evaluation is inherent in generation z. In this way, they grow up because they know what they want and have an opinion built from their early years.

This is the generation of revolution and innovation. They are ready to change, they protect and achieve goals in order to live according to their own understanding. Also, high self-evaluation is a sign of faith in personal qualities, abilities and strengths. It is believed that people with high self-evaluation, even in case of failure, are able to focus on their strong qualities.

Question 7 reveals students' desire for further participation, with 92% saying they would participate in the next edition of the project and 8% having not made a decision. In the project, participants have the opportunity to learn through the experience and present an experience. It is important for young people to show themselves, to be heard and seen with their contribution. They are motivated to participate in non-formal learning and consider this an effective way to develop their skills.

Through the eighth question, the reasons for the inclusion of the participants are further specified. A total of 58% said that they were provoked by the goal of the project and this is the leading reason for subsequent participation, and 33% would participate again to promote another site. The answers to the seventh and eighth questions may be related to students' satisfaction with the results of the project. The fact is, that in the third guidebook about 50% of the students participated in the first two editions, which shows sustainability of the idea and realization.

The ninth question reveals the degree of usefulness of the project experience in the future professional development of the participants (Fig. 3).
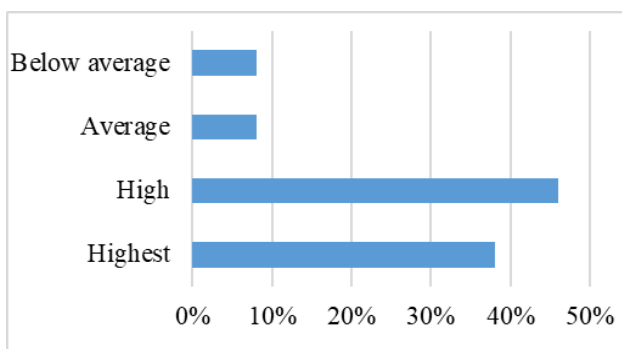

Figure 3. Answers to the question: "Determine the degree of usefulness of this experience in your future professional development?"

The highest degree of usefulness is indicated by 38% of the participants, high 46%, and with medium and below average level of 8%. Criticality is inherent in the generation, and the answers received prove this. It knows, seeks, and finds information. It is able to compare and generate conclusions. This critical thinking develops the individual, but sometimes misleads due to the fact that often the conclusions are not through personal experiences, but through shared foreign experiences. The feeling and desire not to be misled and deceived is so strong that sometimes it deprives them of gaining personal experience, individual appearances and proof.

The tenth question is open to the question and seeks an opinion on what can be improved in the future implementation of the project. Students give various suggestions such as: better presentation of objects, greater popularity among society, and attention to less popular objects. It is also interesting to include students from other specialties such as graphic design and information technology to make a new interactive vision of the photo guide. Teamwork and communication are well received in the name of achieving the goals. They are a desirable model of work for the study group.

In the survey, several statements followed, with students having the opportunity to determine the degree that most accurately corresponds to their opinion. The results are presented below:

- 46% of the participants agree with the statement that increasing the image of the institution turns out to be an important factor in their participation in the project;
- only 8% of respondents consider personal promotion from participation in the project as key to their inclusion, and 23% strongly disagree with the statement;
- 54% of the respondents accept their participation in the project as an opportunity to gain experience in the project activity;
- just as many (54%) find useful the new knowledge about the tourism potential of Bulgaria;
- getting mentoring support from educators is another key point, with 38% fully supporting the claim;
- for 38% of the participants, the approval of relatives, friends and acquaintances also turns out to be important for their participation in the project;
- another aspect is showing commitment to the institution with participation and promotion of the project. Fully agree with the statement are 38%;
- the manifestation of activity in the creative educational process proved to be important for 31% of the participants;
- 62% of the participants confirm that their participation in the project is related to its goal, namely the promotion of tourist sites and places of destination Bulgaria.

3.2. Results of the Association Rule Mining Method

In order to confirm the data obtained and get the most out of the information from the study, another method is used - finding association rules.

It is a type of data mining, in which the goal is to find useful relationships between the attributes of the

analyzed data to support decision-making in various areas, including the study of student motivation [12]. An association rule shows the frequently occurring patterns of a given set of data items. An association analysis is applied in this study to establish the combination of which students' motivations for including the project most often leads to:

- The highest degree of satisfaction with student participation in the project;

- Assessment of the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and competencies as a result of the participation of students in the project in an educational aspect.

For this purpose, a frequent pattern growth algorithm [13], executed in the RapidMiner environment (https://altair.com/altair-rapidminer) is used. The resulting association rules with the highest values of the confidence parameter and the consequent satisfaction (highest) or acquisition of new knowledge, skills and competencies are represented in Table 1.

Table 1. Found association rules and their calculated parameters support and confidence

Antecedent	Consequent	Support	Confidence
Commitment to the institution at which the student is studying; The idea of the project to promote destination of Bulgaria;	Satisfaction (highest)	70.59%	85.71%
Gaining experience in project activities; In-depth knowledge in a particular field of tourism.	Acquisition of new knowledge, skills and competences	76.47%	92.86%
Commitment to the institution at which the student is studying; The idea of the project to promote destination of Bulgaria; Activity in the creative educational process; Mentoring support from teachers.	Acquisition of new knowledge, skills and competences	76.47%	92.86%
Commitment to the institution at which the student is studying; The idea of the project to promote destination of Bulgaria; Gaining experience in project activities; Increasing the image of the institution in which the student is studying; In-depth knowledge in a particular field of tourism	Acquisition of new knowledge, skills and competences	70.59%	92.31%

The two parameters associated with a rule are support and confidence. The support determines the significance of the association rule. According to the found association rule with a consequent satisfaction (highest) (Table 1), 70.59% of all students indicated the listed motives for participation in the project and determined their degree of satisfaction as the highest. The confidence parameter measures the reliability of the conclusion made by an association rule – the resulting value of 85.71% shows what part of the students with the specific motives for participation have the highest satisfaction with it. Similarly, for the other association rules that have as a consequent the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and competencies.

The data obtained can be a good basis for upgrading the study of educational motivation in an academic environment and with new projects and activities.

4. Discussion

In connection with the formation and increase of the educational motivation of the students, according to them, the following conclusions can be drawn about their benefits from the project:

- improvement of communication capabilities;
- acquiring new knowledge, skills, and competences;
- increase self-evaluation;
- gaining experience in the project activity and hence enriching the personal portfolio;
- obtaining approval and support from relatives, friends, and acquaintances;
- showing commitment to the educational institution and its image.

The presented results show the real assessment of young people for their participation in a different form of the educational process accompanying their academic performance. With the formation of motivation for learning, a positive emotional attitude towards the learning process and a higher level of satisfaction with the achieved results is created [10].

In order to achieve educational motivation, topics that provoke interest among students and have an impact on them should be addressed. In the specific project, aspects of both personal development and impact on the organization they represent (improving the image) and on the destination (for promotion) are affected. This corresponds to the profile of the generation under consideration and their desire to be useful to a particular cause, but without neglecting themselves.

The creation, search, and introduction of new educational models are key when it comes to training students in a broad specialty such as "Tourism", so that the attitudes and expectations of the students in them are realized and as useful as possible for both parties (university-student).

5. Conclusion

From the point of view of education, projects such as the one presented bring personal satisfaction to the participants, but also form a real creative product. Academic motivation can be defined as a psychological process that guides students and stimulates them to learn and perform a particular task. This type of activity provokes individuals to develop professionally and create a product while still learning. Building learning habits, commitment to the institution, presenting a certain appearance to staff users is an important commitment that young people realize as useful, accept, and fulfill. They are motivated and willing to work, especially when they have a very clearly defined goal and tasks.

Educational motivation for everyone has a different dimension and sense of their personal development and the organization in which they are trained. Such educational projects, in which students see the result of labor input within the foreseeable period, can serve as a tool for teachers in building and maintaining educational motivation.

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