

The Development of Skills to Secure Motivation in an Ever-Changing Society

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ABSTRACT: The present times brought about immense socio-economic transformations with major challenges in the sphere of the dynamic human adaptation to these changes. The consequences of the contemporary technical-scientific evolution in the sphere of renewing the volume of information, has directly affected how information is presented. This paper emphasizes that these changes generated the challenge of an individual's inability to adapt, and the incapacity to actively participate in the social and personal transformation. A change of mentality presupposes assuming risks, sustained effort, stress, conflicts, and endurance. To be efficient, such a change needs to take place at the individual level, and then continue by developing skills and securing motivation in the context of an ever-changing society. At the same time, this paper emphasizes that the mere existence of an ideal is insufficient unless there is a willingness to adapt by making changes. When we pass from the mentality that says "if I had, I would do and so I would be," to "I am, so I will do and I will have," one can say that a very important step has been made for reaching the goal.

KEY WORDS: skill, motivation, society, change, education.

In the context of an ever-changing society, the family, as well as, the school and the church will be faced with a growing number of diverse problems. For this reason, the stimulation of flexibility is extremely important, coupled with the necessity of continual adaptation to the changes made. At the same time, a distinctly

important aspect that can contribute to the development of society is the change of mentality. Such a change has a determining role in the developing of skills and the securing of motivation in the context of an ever-changing society. Without a doubt, such a change takes time, but, as Lazar Vlăsceanu remarked:

As separate as social time and space are, as far removed from each other they are also. Communication is more and more cross-bordered and intermediated. Individuals become more and more autonomous and busy with the construction of their own identity and styles. Individualization is slowly taking the place of socialization. . . . The social groups and networks are multiplying and transforming quickly and permanently in new social movements, even global. The social systems and its actors are unplugging themselves contextually and eventually reform themselves through crossing some social and cultural borders, especially because of migration which is more and more intense.¹

In order for the change to be adequate, education needs to also be awarded special attention.² It is known that education is indispensable to human existence, social development, and to the evolution of each individual. Education not only secures a continuity of human civilization, but also aids in research and innovation necessary for social progress. Over time we can observe an evolution in the educational realm. For example, in the medieval period, the foundation of the education ideal was established in the formation of the knight, which presupposed the developing of physical and esthetical characteristics, joined with some of the moral virtues.

In the enlightenment period, a change of mentality took place. This can be deduced from the promotion of the formation of the man who was a creator of culture, an enlightened man. In the 19th century, the pedagogical movements considered that the educational ideal was founded on personality; conceived as being deeply human; harmoniously developed; which was accounted for by an integral education along with self-education. Thus, the evolution of education, together with available conditions and resources made the adaptation of man and change of mentality possible..

Speaking about the evolution of human responsibility, Serban Iosiffescu, Paloma Petrescu and Constantin Vitanos were emphasizing the fact that this is done in the following cycle: to know; to learn how to do; to want to be; to learn how to be with others; to learn to be and to become.³ In the contemporary society, education is a complex development of the personality from all perspectives. This is made concrete through the maximum capitalization of the human personality.

A distinctly important problem in the education process has become assuring an education that contributes to the development of skills and security of motivation.

It has become obvious, Serban Iosifescu said, that, no matter how well scientific work is organized; no matter how good the material conditions of work; and no matter how great the incentives of rewards' system would be; the performances do not grow at the expected level, but on the contrary, they grow even less. Most of the time, the reasons for these situations are the human relationships involved in that specific organization, which are at least as important as planning, organizing, operational leading, and control—the classic core functions of the scientific management.⁴

To the question: “Can the bureaucratic organization face the turbulent times that we live in?” The unanimous answer, of the managers, as well as, of the researchers in the area, is a negative one. Thus a switch is needed from the management that is “centered in control” (specific to bureaucratic organizations), to the management that is centered in commitment. These objectives of the school, organization, and church, are more rapidly and easily attainable.

Surely, in this context, questions like these can arise: “Can the school unit lead without a rigorous control? How do I know what motivates people to work? Why do some work out of passion while others work for supplementary advantages? How can I motivate people given the material conditions that we live in?”

To answer positively to each of these questions, intelligent management is needed which can have set its goals in developing skills and securing motivation.

Douglas McGregor in his work “The Human Side of Enterprise”, which appeared in 1960, identifies two sets of presuppositions about people and their work which he named, “The X Theory” and “The Y Theory”.⁵

The X Theory	The Y Theory
Man dislikes work and, if he can, he avoids it.	Work is a natural activity and it is necessary for the spiritual development of man.
Man needs to be forced or bribed to make necessary effort.	Man desires an interesting work and if he has good conditions, will work with pleasure.
Man prefers to be lead rather than accept the answers.	People orient themselves towards acceptable duties and in the proper context accept the answers.
Man is motivated, especially by money and by the insecurity of his safety.	In proper conditions man is motivated by his will to fulfill his dream.

Unquestionably, Serban Iosifescu said, that man is a complex being, his activity being the result of the intervention of a series of determining and favorable factors. Still, what motivates us to act one way or the other? In other words, the motives for our actions (and of our peers) are essential for our living together in the sphere of an organization, as well as, for the realizations of its end. For this reason, knowing some of the theories of motivation can be an explanatory factor and an extremely useful leaning point for the concrete action.⁶

Regarding the way to motivate the ones involved in the educational process, helping them at the same time to develop necessary skills, Abraham Maslow proposed the theory of “hierarchy–zing the human needs”⁷. In building this theory, the author starts from these premises:

- Human behavior is directed by those needs that are not met.
- Man is never fully satisfied: once some of his needs are met, others take their place.
- There is a certain order (hierarchy) in the apparition and the satisfaction of the needs, generally the same for all people.
- Generally, not meeting some less important needs blocks the more important ones from rising.⁸

The fact needs to be pointed out that the activity of learning, in itself, is motivation if it meets the needs, fulfills the interests, and completes the experience of the ones involved in the educational process. This fact is so much more important, as Lazar Vlăsceanu said, given the fact that:

For all the observers of the contemporary world, individualism, an invention of the Enlightenment and of modern society, is growing and the maximization of the personal liberties has become a purpose unto itself, with little correlation between it and the responsibilities toward others. While the possibilities of association have grown with no limits, because of social mobility and the internet, interpersonal trust or trust in the traditional institutions has grown smaller proportionately. The consequence is visible: the growing freedom of association is being combined with a poorer life as a group; along with an increasing isolation and an incapacity of engaging morally that is shrinking. All of the actual statistical-empirical data are convincingly illustrating that the level of criminality and social disorder has grown; that family and family relationships are no longer sources of social cohesion; and that the levels of interpersonal trust in traditional institutions have reduced to alarming levels.⁹

A different theory of motivation, initiated by Victor Vroom is the “theory of expectation”. According to him: “people are not merely ATMs or “black boxes” that react determinately to stimulus depending on the situation in which they are. They come with different experiences, with attitudes, value systems and their own models of behavior; in one word, they come with their own personality.¹⁰

According to Serban Iosifescu, the premises of this theory are:

- The human behavior is not determined by reality, but the way in which this reality is perceived by each individual;
- Relating to reality is influenced by the preferences of the person, and by the value which they attribute to one or more elements from the perceived reality;

- Each person has expectancies regarding the possibility that certain actions will bring certain results;
- Thus, actions are instruments which need to result, generally, in what the person wills for and perceives as rewarding.¹¹

The fundamental concepts of this theory are the expectancy that a certain action will lead to certain results; and the value which a person attributes to the results of those certain actions, directly correlate to the measure in which those results are desired.

In *Sociology and modernity, Transactions towards the reflexive modernity*, on the subject of the individual's identity and responsibility in an ever-changing society, Lazar Vlăsceanu accentuated these:

The individual has come to be alone regarding a de-constructing and re-constructing universe. Choosing a course of action presupposes, before all else, to know who he is and what he wants. By discovering who he is, he will find a proper way of acting. Violent actions can also be seen as illustrations of identity crisis. The construction of identity precedes action, and then it derives from it. Indeed, not every action is derived from the constructed identity. Socialization and professional formation is achieved, already internalized. Beyond these, the diversity of the field of action and of social openings are multiplying. Identity processes generate the ways to be and to act in order to test; possibly change; to remain in construction; to signify; and to fix a direction. The construction of identity appears to be a cognitive activity which organizes the necessary information for self in regards to a course of action. Individual failures in transition are, actually, failures in building the identity. Two diseases seem to be the source of these failures: depression and confusion. The first is derived from the explosion of freedom and from the multiplication of cultural references; of consuming; of action; etc. This is manifested through uncontrolled inflation of the aspirations and options; and through a growing subjectivity. Personal freedom and autonomy confronting a multitude of possible options risks to generate a state of action and a continual prospection: too many possible options and none mobilizing; too many ways of actions and no option for an alternative;

a permanent reflection and no decision; the calling of the imposed way, its non-existence and subsequent falling into depression. The disease of depression converted in inaction is actually the identity reverse of the lack of construction of self and of the lack of support in the structural protection which no longer exists. The other disease is generated by value confusion and by the anomic state specific to transition. It is the disease of value confusion. We know that any normal action is conditioned by the selection and orientation of value so that disorder in action is congruent with a coherent value system. In transition there is no "exterior power" capable to introduce order and equilibrium in the system of value and norms. The only agent capable of fixing the coherent value sphere and to eliminate the anomic redundancy is the individual himself through his own identity construction. Identity becomes the condition of the efficient action, the way of overcoming the disease of confusion which corresponds to the anomic state the agent responsible for successes. The individual self, trusting his own strengths, builds his own identity, becomes an agent of efficient actions because otherwise it will be lost in the meanders of transition. Unfortunately, the proportion of those late in identity construction and affected by the disease of depression or value confusion is still numerous. The inequalities do not seem to stagnate or to enter in recession, but they are instead growing, reaching epidemic proportions.¹²

Thus, skill development allows each individual to efficiently confront the requirements and challenges of daily life. Forming life skills offers the opportunity to assume initiative and responsibilities for one's own life; helps one think critically and creatively; brings solutions to conflicts; develops toleration towards others; builds relationships; and enables efficient communication with one's peers.

When considering the dynamic of society coupled with personal needs, motivation is extremely important in the choices that one makes, as well as, the integration in society, and the socio-professional evolution of each one. Motivation stands at the base of the behaviors and the actions done by an individual in a group. It can be said that motivation represents the agent which helps us go forward when changes come unexpectedly. Consequently, we need to give it special attention.

NOTES

- ¹ Lazăr Vlăsceanu, *Sociologie și modernitate. Tranziții spre modernitatea reflexivă* (București: Editura Polirom, 2007), 9.
- ² Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, "Educația – prin prisma ideilor unor filosofilor moderni," in *Educație: Educație specială* (2011 nr.1): 5–10.
- ³ Șerban Iosifescu, Paloma Petrescu, Constantin Vitanos, "Proiectul: descriere generală și concepte fundamentale," in *Management educațional pentru instituțiile de învățământ* (București: Ministerul Educației și Cercetării, 2001), 313.
- ⁴ Șerban Iosifescu, "Comunicarea managerială," in *Management educațional pentru instituțiile de învățământ* (București: Ministerul Educației și Cercetării, 2001), 46.
- ⁵ Douglas McGregor, "The Human Side of Enterprise," in *Managementul educațional pentru instituțiile de învățământ* (București: Ministerul Educației și Cercetării, 2001), 47–48.
- ⁶ Iosifescu, "Comunicarea managerială," 49.
- ⁷ Teoria lui Maslow este cea mai cunoscută teorie a motivației și are aplicații în toate domeniile relațiilor umane.
- ⁸ Iosifescu, "Comunicarea managerială," 49.
- ⁹ Vlăsceanu, *Sociologie și modernitate*, 72.
- ¹⁰ Victor Vroom, E. Deci, *The Human Motivation*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975.
- ¹¹ Iosifescu, "Comunicarea managerială," 53–54.
- ¹² Vlăsceanu, *Sociologie și modernitate*, 169–170.