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# TEACHERS' MOTIVATION IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

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Review paper

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## **Abstract**

*Teachers' motivation has always been an important aspect and significant factor in the work of teachers. Motivated teachers are a key component of the quality of education. Therefore, research on teacher motivation is on the rise. Effective teaching contributes significantly to improving student performance and the well-being of our society. In recent years, much effort has been made to change teachers' conceptions. Many professional development programs are designed to improve the competences of teachers. With the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the learning environment became digital overnight, and classrooms were transferred to virtual platforms. All these changes increased the workload of teachers and emphasized the responsibility of teachers for the successful implementation of this transformation. The aim of this article is to give an overview of scientific works on teacher motivation, with a special emphasis on the digital environment.*

**Keywords:** *motivation, teachers, digital learning environment*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Motivation is a strong ambition to achieve goals. It appears every day in our social and business life. Motivation is a vital element of organizational behavior as a factor that directs and reveals human behavior in the organization (Örücü and Kambur, 2008). Motivation can be defined as the power that directs behavior towards a goal or carries out behavior towards a purpose (Öztürk and Dündar, 2003). Job motivation is considered a process that empowers, nourishes and directs behavior in an organization (Leonard et al., 1999). Since the most crucial factor of each organization are its human resources, leaders should pay a lot of attention to motivate their employees. Only motivated human resources can lead the organization to the achievement of its goals.

In 1985, Edward Deci and Richard Ryan developed a macro theory of human motivation based on motivation, development and human well-being. The theory distinguishes motivation with respect to the degree of autonomy, and its main constructs are amotivation, autonomous and controlling motivation. While amotivation means a complete absence of motivation, autonomous represents norms that are conditioned by "personal interests and values" (Koestner, Otis, Powers, Pelletier, & Gagnon, 2008, p. 1,202). On the other hand, in the case of controlled motivation, the individual is forced by external or internal factors. Although Deci and Ryan macro theory was developed more than thirty years ago, its constructs can be used even nowadays.

Motivation is a powerful tool that is of great relevance for teachers in relation to their job fulfillment and performance. Motivation means "readiness, urge or desire to participate in good teaching". (Michaelova, 2002, p. 5) In parallel, highly motivated teachers have a positive effect on student achievement. Research has shown that the ways teachers motivate themselves is related to their ability to motivate students (Atkinson, 2000; Bernaus, Wilson, & Gardner, 2009). Motivated students are reflection of motivated teachers.

The causes of motivation are different. Cognitive evaluation theory distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. (Ambrose and Kulik 1999).

Intrinsic motivation is a stimulus framed by interest in the work one is doing, curiosity or pleasure. One's satisfaction and desire for the work one intends to do is a crucial element of intrinsic motivation (Joo and Lim, 2009). Work itself is a power because the person has fun doing their work (Cooman et al., 2007; Lin, 2007; Littlejohn, 2008; Millette and Gagne, 2008; Osterloh et al., 2001). A person with intrinsic motivation finds their work fun and rewarding. According to Pelletier, SéguinLévesque and Legault, 2002, intrinsic approaches are connected to higher levels of teaching skills and emphasize teachers' self-determined motivation. Intrinsic motivation is made up of three groups of goals: intrinsic motivation for knowledge, intrinsic motivation to achieve goals, or intrinsic motivation to improve performance (Vallerand and Bissonnette 1992). The literature shows that intrinsic motivation to teach strengthens teachers' well-being and practical results, reduces awareness of burnout and possible health problems. (Bechter et al. 2021). Highly motivated teachers inspire students to achieve motivational and behavioral outcomes.

Extrinsic motivation is related to meeting needs not primarily with money. Organizations demand human resources to achieve their goals and use monetary motivators to gain internalize organizational purposes (Osterloh et al., 2001). Therefore, extrinsic motivation is caused by reward and punishment unlike intrinsic motivation (Goodridge, 2006; Littlejohn, 2008).

According to McKenzie 2002; Postareff et al. 2007, many research studies on teacher professional development examine conceptions of teaching and, to a lesser extent, teacher behavior (Gibbs and Coffey 2004; Stes et al. 2010). On the other hand, an important thing, the teacher's motivation, was left out. In addition to the above-mentioned ideas and behaviors, motivation shows how teachers perform their work. Likewise, motivation is described as "a psychological force that enables action and is based on the teacher's involvement/non-involvement in every teaching activity". (Hassaskhah, 2016, p. 859).

According to a 2016 study by Han & Yin, high levels of teacher motivation are connected to different educational factors, such as positive educational reforms, high-quality teaching practices, improved teacher well-being, and high levels of student motivation.

Different professional development programs have been designed to improve the competences of teachers considering that the combination of competences and motivation is an important component for the success of teachers (Ambrose and Kulik 1999).

Motivation for teaching has not been sufficiently researched knowing that it is a key element in achieving learning outcomes.

## **2. TEACHERS` MOTIVATION IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT**

At the beginning of the 21st century, educational institutions started introducing online education with the aim of reaching a larger number of students. This was particularly true of vocational and foreign language schools that offered online courses in asynchronous and/or synchronous forms of learning.

Asynchronous learning gives learners opportunity to access materials anytime and anywhere and synchronous learning allows actual time interaction. (Aslan, G., 2021)

The COVID-19 pandemic at the beginning of 2020 changed the status quo and introduced a digital transformation of education overnight. The need for remote education has grown tremendously. Due to the impossibility of holding live classes, the importance of online classes has increased, especially in education among countries. (Dwivedi et al., 2020; Paudel, 2021). As online education overwhelms the obstacles of time and place and offers independent and flexible education, it has grown to be commonplace to meet the changing demands of societies. By combining hybrid and online learning, students are provided with flexibility and a secure network for obtaining higher education at a distance. (Chan et al. 2021) For example, additional courses are necessary in many professions; education is no longer associated only to young students and lifelong learning is encouraged (Mehrotra, Hollister & McGahey, 2001).

A 2020 report by the International Association of Universities determined technological infrastructure and accessibility, competencies for distance learning and research scope as the three main challenges to online learning. (Chan et al. 2021) They also cite the digital gap, socioeconomic bias with large groups of learners and lack of preparation as shortcomings. Shim & Lee, 2020 state that at the global level, one of the biggest challenges, both according to teachers and students, is the issue of quality; online learning is worse than face-to-face classes.

The main conclusion of the research of Chien, Kao, Yeh and Lin, 2012 confirms that teachers with stronger motivation express more positive attitudes and have better perception, less anxiety and more often use online learning and information technology for professional development. However, the question is: how to increase teacher motivation? One of the decisive elements can be professional development and self-fulfillment of an individual.

According to Maslow, the position in the rank of needs belongs to self-fulfillment or self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Implemented to the work domain, this need refers to: challenging work, the demand for a creative task, the possibility of advancement and success at work. If we assume that the ability to use new technologies will turn into a "condition sine qua non of education", then this competence turns into a "condition sine qua non" of the lack of professional achievement of teachers tomorrow.

According to Luo, Chen, and Hsieh, 2011, regarding motivational issues in the delivery of e-learning courses, the combined expectation model regards that personal and institutional factors play an essential role.

Different professional development programs have been designed to improve the competences of teachers considering that the combination of competences and motivation is an important component for the success of teachers (Ambrose and Kulik 1999). Today one can find teachers called digital immigrants with no experience and expertise in e-learning or in general new technologies and repeatedly showing doubts about the effectiveness of e-learning.

According to Sorebo, Halvari, Gulli, & Kristiansen, 2009. study, the level of noted e-learning competence is determined for the development of valuable beliefs and intrinsic motivation for e-learning. On the contrary, some teachers are motivated to use the e-learning system and consider it a very practical tool for carrying out their teaching outcomes, but use it with a narrow intensity. In the main, a teacher believes he or she is using an e-learning system, but the question is to what extent and with what outcome. In other words, the question is the effect of work, students content with it, effectiveness regarding predicted and desired teaching outcomes, etc.

According to Ergün Reçepoğlu's research, in 2014 teachers have the highest motivation regarding commitment to work and the lowest related to integration with work. The motivation of teachers in secondary schools varies considerably regarding the age, length of service and degree of education. However, teachers' motivation does not differ to an important extent taking into account the teacher's gender.

### 3. VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Virtual learning environment or VLE is an educational medium whose goal is resilience of learning and successful interaction among teachers and students. Namely, it is an online platform that contains numerous educational activities and encourages digital competences equally to quizzes, lessons, discussions on forums and e-books (Abdelhag & Osman, 2014; Boeve et al., 2016). In fact, this way of learning provides information, but not instructions on how to learn.

Teachers and students are enabled to choose the time and place of learning or teaching. Cavus 2011 points out that the main advantage of VLE is the competence to overwhelm time and place; neither teachers nor students need to be physically present in one place. It has a positive effect on teachers' motivation. It enables teachers to coordinate their work and private lives more effectively.

Enforcing VLE in the teaching and learning system increases teacher confidence and encourages collaborative practices in teaching (Hrtonova et al. 2015). Teachers are enabled to share personal views and experiences with the aim of improving work performance. (Pilkington et al., 2000).

According to research by Salma & Fariz, in 2014 just 2% of teachers utilized VLE in the teaching and learning system. With the emergence of the Covid 19 virus, the situation has changed significantly. However, there is still a significant number of teachers who are not motivated to use VLE in teaching. The reason refers to the challenges seen by teachers and students, similarly to limited access to the Internet, lack of expertise in the use of digital technology, etc., the quality of technological facilities that do not reach the necessary standard (Ahmad et al., 2022). The new way of working burdens teachers and forces them to invest additional effort and time. In any case, it is necessary to work on additional motivation of teachers to use VLE.

### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Despite the significant expansion in the amount of research on motivation of teachers, the awareness based on how to advance teacher motivation is narrow.

A significant number of researchers agree on the fact that motivated teachers are a key component of the quality of education; motivation is a powerful tool that is of great relevance for teachers in relation to their job fulfillment and performance (Michaelova, 2002.) According to Atkinson, 2000; Bernaus, Wilson, & Gardner, 2009. research, the ways teachers motivate themselves is related to their ability to motivate students. Therefore, motivated students are the reflexion of motivated teachers.

Regarding the types of motivation, intrinsic motivation to teach strengthens teachers' well-being and practical results, reduces awareness of burnout and possible health problems. (Bechter et al. 2021). On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is caused by reward and punishment unlike intrinsic motivation (Goodridge, 2006; Littlejohn, 2008). While intrinsic motivation is an internal element, extrinsic motivation is connected to external factors.

Motivation shows how teachers perform their work. Hassaskhah, 2016. describes motivation as "a psychological force that enables action and is based on the teacher's involvement/non-involvement in every teaching activity".

Besides, high levels of teacher motivation are connected to different educational factors, such as positive educational reforms, high-quality teaching practices, improved teacher well-being, and high levels of student motivation (Han & Yin, 2016.)

McKenzie 2002; Postareff et al. 2007, examine conceptions of teaching and, to a lesser extent, teacher behavior (Gibbs and Coffey 2004; Stes et al. 2010). On the contrary, an important thing, the teacher's motivation, was left out.

Since the learning environment became digital overnight due to Covid, classrooms were transferred to virtual platforms. The teachers were given a new task, better to say a burden.

Motivation has a bigger influence in teaching in digital environment. Chien, Kao, Yeh and Lin, 2012 research shows that teachers with stronger motivation express more positive attitudes and have better perception, less anxiety and more often use online learning and information technology for professional development.

However, the question is: how to increase teacher motivation? One of the decisive elements can be professional development and self-fulfillment of an individual. (Chien, Kao, Yeh and Lin, 2012.). Likewise, Sorebo, Halvari, Gulli, & Kristiansen, 2009. study shows that the level of noted e-learning competence is determined by the development of valuable beliefs and intrinsic motivation for e-learning. Therefore, internal factors are the basics for motivation in digital environment. This is precisely why, to achieve self-fulfillment in the digital age, teachers should put effort in getting expertise and competence that would permit them to be actively engaged in forthcoming education, that could become one of the predominant internal motivational actions. (Ogrizek Biškupić I. et al., 2015)

On the other hand, external factors must not be disregarded. According to Luo, Chen, and Hsieh, 2011, regarding motivational issues in the delivery of e-learning courses, the combined expectation model regards that personal and institutional factors play an essential role.

Given that teachers are an extremely necessary source of data about the teaching process and the benefits and prospects of applying information and communication technology, it is important to include them in decision-making, which will also affect the motivation for teaching. Secondly, for the same reason, it is necessary to provide support and incentives for the introduction of new ways and methods of work in teaching with the aim of overcoming fears. (Ward et al. 2010)

To conclude, motivation for teaching is affected by internal and external factors which are even more expressed in the digital environment.

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