

TEACHERS' MOTIVATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS REGARDING LIFELONG LEARNING

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Abstract: The global contemporary economic and social context, in constant change, makes the learning process undergo constant structural changes with profound implications. These transformations also influence practices, principles and methods used in the field of learning and teaching. The present research is focused on the motivations and expectations of teachers regarding lifelong learning. Their main motivator is to improve teaching tools, techniques and methods. The study population consists of educators who teach the national language and literature (Romanian) to national minorities (Hungarian, German, Roma, Tatar, Serbian, Ukrainian, etc.) and to migrants from various states. The respondents have participated in a lifelong learning program.

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Introduction

Teachers should receive permanent support for continuous training throughout their careers. At the same time, they should be encouraged to develop or strengthen their abilities of transmitting lifelong learning principles to students. These principles are otherwise stated by EU regulations on lifelong learning (European Commission, 2014) and by the provisions of UNESCO (UNESCO, 2014; Tate et al., 2011). In view of these principles, Babeş-Bolyai University has organized courses for those teachers who teach Romanian to national minorities or immigrants (Dabija and Pop, 2014; Dabija et al., 2017). Some of the goals of these courses include helping teachers adequately structure learning units, rigorously construct lectures, create useful training courses, use

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valuable real life examples, enhance the attractiveness of classes, stimulate course attendance, increase class interactivity. These topics are consistent with literature (Finsterwalde and Wagner et. al., 2013), which considers necessary the introduction of a new way of teaching.

In the present research, the authors have focused on exploring the interests of participants in lifelong training courses. Lifelong education involves effective use of many learning resources and of a complex and diverse didactic infrastructure, which is represented not only by planning or technical equipment, but also by worksheets, practical examples, case studies, etc.

1. Lifelong Learning

Rapid changes in contemporary society, caused by new phenomena and processes, such as globalization, with its multiple facets, lead to modifications in the educational processes as well. Their rhythm sometimes exceeds the ability of humans and institutions to adjust to the modern world. The relationship between the new knowledge-based economy and the need to apply the principles of lifelong learning is already well known and studied in the literature (Laal and Salama, 2012). Its aim is to make people more efficient and more flexible. Most often it refers to adapting the capabilities of individuals or social groups to the dynamism of economic life and to the socio-economic transformations present everywhere. The allocation of lifelong learning responsibilities is part of the revised Lisbon Agenda (Rodrigues, 2006). Currently, we witness a continuous readjustment and renewal of all standards, regulations, procedures and forms of learning. Even if they are not always adapted to local or traditional education, they need to excel through increased efficiency of their activities, but also to meet the challenges of the new society, whose values are in constant evolution and transformation. It is also necessary to provide specific learning infrastructure, to create and diversify learning opportunities, to facilitate labor market integration and entrepreneurship and to monitor the whole learning process so as it follows practical goals (Rodrigues, 2006).

The need for continuous readjustment of the learning process has generated a “storm” of ideas and concepts in the literature, on the role of lifelong learning. Klug et al. (2014) have long ago reported the difficulty or even impossibility to develop an indicator or a set of indicators to measure teachers’ competence in promoting lifelong learning principles among students. It is also difficult to estimate the impact of training courses on the society and on teachers’ skills and knowledge (Belás et al., 2015; Bodea et al., 2015; O’Leary, 2015).

Lifelong learning can be defined as the totality of individuals’ specific activities, regardless of age, for self-improvement, for assimilation of new knowledge, for acquiring or enhancing their skills and abilities in various fields, to facilitate access to employment, career advancement, recognition from peers, and social prestige (Klug et al., 2014). In the process of lifelong learning, two very important dimensions must be considered: self-control and motivation, which are, at the same time, antagonistic and complementary to each other. Self-control has mainly individual-organizational dimensions, resulting largely from individuals’ personal skills to cope with certain situations. In practice, self-control depends on the various aspects of people’s motivation to act or follow a certain path (Bolhuis, 2003). Therefore, these two dimensions interfere, generating a relationship of interdependence, which can give rise to many practical facets of the whole learning process.

2. Motivations for Lifelong Learning Involvement

The educational system, based on the principles of learning throughout the entire life, is characterized by a series of deep strategic mutations (Demirel, 2009). In fact, lifelong learning is an open system of courses and training activities, addressed to target groups with needs, socio-demographic and professional characteristics that are more and more varied. Accessing lifelong learning courses of various organizations (universities, schools, research and training centers affiliated to public or private organizations, etc.) leads to increased chances of promotion, timely adjustment to new realities, gain of new information and/ or knowledge or even re-education of participants. Through partnerships and cooperation among educational institutions, the appropriate framework to ensure continuity of adult learning and training throughout life is created. This avoids depreciation of the useful content of information transmitted (Pelău et al., 2011).

A major advantage of lifelong learning processes is that it is no longer confined to certain special periods allotted to such activities. Instead, it is ongoing, addressing more and more diverse and complex issues. One difficulty in the proper implementation of lifelong learning is the monitoring of knowledge assimilation and the certification of such training cycles (Băcilă et al., 2014). On the one hand, involvement, merits, acquisition of knowledge, skills and/ or abilities of participants should be recognized, while on the other hand issuing diplomas or certificates, acknowledged by various authorities and/ or public or private organizations should be considered (Pocatilu and Ciurea, 2011). Organizing such courses under the auspices of a university and the collaboration with ministries and/ or competent authorities for official acknowledgement is often a viable way of attracting and maintaining an increased interest among potential beneficiaries of such trainings (Sălcudean et al., 2014).

The interest in active lifelong training has a greater relevance now, due to the rapid pace of changes in contemporary society and economy. Mutations in the sphere of innovation (Postelnicu and Dabija, 2015), enhanced technological change, ease of remote communication and the speed of information dissemination have caused profound changes in the educational process as well. Lifelong education is far from being safe from the waves of globalization of economic and social life. It must meet the challenges of an evolving environment, where information is subject to ongoing impairment. Therefore, it requires a periodic update of the spectrum of information and knowledge (Demirel, 2009). Thus, for example, school teachers, doctors, lawyers or other socio - professional categories must attend regular training courses and accumulate a certain number of professional credits.

Active participation of learners in lifelong education programs largely depends on their *motivations* (Duke and Hinzen, 2014). The desire for self-improvement, for updating professional knowledge, for getting practical experience, for collaboration with other colleagues, for certificates or financial rewards, existing national standards or procedures of revaluation within organizations, etc. may be thorough reasons for attending lifelong training courses. In creating lifelong education courses, organizers must correlate these motives with the socio-demographic characteristics of participants (income, age, gender, skills level, teaching degree etc.), so that the formed groups are as heterogeneous possible, for effective and efficient learning (Blanden et al., 2012). There are several studies

(Collinson and Cook, 2004; Galvez et al., 2016) on the motivations of teachers to attend training courses. Collinson and Cook (2004) identify 43 motivational factors in teachers' activity, but also many barriers that prevent them from participating in lifelong education.

To increase the efficiency and usefulness of training programs throughout life, attitudinal, physical, material or structural *barriers* must be considered (Laal, 2011). *Attitudinal* limitations refer to the lack of interest or motivation of students. Issuing diplomas, certificates, credit points or prizes may counteract or minimize these risks. Learning deficiencies can be corrected in time, but the general attitude of the students on learning, especially at an old age, is often problematic (Helterbran, 2005), since it largely depends on their inner stimuli. *Physical or material barriers* pertain to difficulties to cover the actual costs of the educational process, to burdensome access to information or learning resources, etc. (Dinu, 2010; Dabija et al., 2014). These problems can also be overcome by building partnerships with universities and other educational institutions to attract experienced trainers, constantly seeking to upgrade their learning resources or to develop new ones. The costs of organizing and carrying out training projects may also be covered from various external sources, such as European, national or local funds, but also through partnerships with companies or other organizations. *Structural barriers* are caused by lack of specialized training, by constraints to access superior hierarchical positions (Helterbran, 2005). Each of these groups of factors is likely to influence, with various intensities, at certain times, the learning process. But they can also sometimes obstruct access of adults to superior knowledge and/ or self-improvement.

Kinash et al. (2015) emphasized the structure and level of response from students in evaluating the performance of the educational process, revealing, based on data provided by schools, measures to improve quality, performance indicators, feedback methods, actions for better involvement of target segments in the educational process, use of information techniques. Even though in certain stages of professional development, the renewal and improvement of knowledge depend exclusively on the capabilities of the employer organization, school remains the founder of an individual's set of knowledge, abilities and competences. Individuals' desire to involve in continuous learning also depends on how captivating school years have been.

3. Research Methodology

The aim of the current research is to identify teachers' motivations and expectations regarding continuous training programs. The relevance of these courses for acquiring knowledge, competences and skills is also of interest. With these purposes in view, the authors have appealed to a representative quantitative empirical research. In this regard, the opinions of participants to training courses funded by the European Union have been analyzed. The subject of the training program has been improving the knowledge of those educators who teach Romanian to national minorities (Hungarian, German, Turkish, Tatar, Serbian, etc.) and to migrants from other states in primary, medium and high schools, in special or vocational schools, etc. The training courses have been organized by country's largest university, Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca.

All participants in the final conference of the training program, 1,300 in all, have filled in the questionnaire. Out of these, 1,200 have been validated. Given that responses from all teachers (total research) have been yielded, no statistical sampling has had to be carried out. Regarding the structure of the sample of teachers, most of them are females (95.2%), primarily aged between 30 and 39 years old (45.8%). The relatively low presence of males in the sample is determined by the small number of male Romanian language teachers.

Table 1. Distribution of teachers in the sample by age and gender or type of school area

Gender/ Area	Age groups				Total
	Under 30 years	30 - 39 years	40 - 49 years	50 - 59 years)	
Male	0.1%	2.0%	1.5%	1.2%	4.8%
Female	9.8%	43.8%	33.0%	8.5%	95.2%
Total	9.9%	45.8%	34.5%	9.8%	100.0%
Urban	4.5%	24.0%	19.5%	5.6%	53.6%
Rural	5.6%	21.5%	15.3%	3.9%	46.4%
Total	10.1%	45.5%	34.8%	9.5%	100.0%

Teachers participating in this research come from different types of schools, both primary and medium or high (secondary), special schools, pedagogical, theoretical, technological, theological or vocational high schools and colleges. The breakdown of respondents by type of schools of origin is displayed in table 2. Most participants in the survey come from middle schools (67.7%), technological (11.2%) or theoretical (9.2%) high schools.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by type of institution and teaching degree

Type of institution	School center for inclusive education	Technological high school	Theoretical high school	Middle school	Primary school	Others (pedagogical, theological & vocational (arts, sports) high schools)	Total
Responses	6.2%	11.2%	9.2%	67.7%	2.6%	3.1%	100%

The training program consists of 11 modules, a participant attending a maximum of three such courses. The modules have been compiled based on the training needs of the target group. The themes have been divided per school cycles (primary, medium and high school), and based on skills acquired: the process of teaching/ learning; evaluation process; design, organization and evaluation of educational activities; multicultural education and ICT. The modules are: Teaching and learning process of Romanian language to national minorities in primary, middle or high school; The evaluation process of the Romanian language to national minorities primary, middle or high school; The design, organization and evaluation of educational activities in primary or secondary education; Multicultural education for primary or secondary education; ICT for teachers of Romanian language to national minorities - intermediate level.

Table 3. The distribution of respondents by age groups and number of training programs attended

Number of programs*	Age groups in years (%)					School area (%)		
	Under 30	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
One	2.8	14.2	9.7	2.8	29.4	15.6	14.1	29.7
Two	0.7	8.7	7.8	1.8	18.9	9.7	9.2	18.8
Three	0.2	2.3	2.6	1.2	6.2	3.9	2.4	6.2
None	6.3	20.8	14.3	4.1	45.5	24.5	20.8	45.2
Total	9.9	45.9	34.4	9.8	100.0	53.6	46.4	100.0

* Number of programs – the number of programs attended by the respondents

Of the 1,200 respondents, 45.5% have not attended any of the training programs, but have been accepted at the final conference of the project (table 3). Most of the respondents attending training courses have participated in one (29.4%), while 18.9% have participated in two and just 6.2% in three modules. The ranking based on the number of programs attended is the same for the overall sample and for each age group or school area (see table 3) and for each school type (see table 4).

Table 4. Distribution of respondents by type of schools and number of training programs attended

Type of institution/ number of programs attended	One	Two	Three	None	Total
School center for inclusive education (special school)	1.3%	1.1%	0.5%	3.4%	6.3%
Technological high school	3.7%	2.0%	0.3%	5.0%	11.0%
Theoretical high school	2.7%	1.6%	0.7%	4.5%	9.4%
Middle school	20.7%	13.0%	4.0%	29.7%	67.5%
Primary school	0.7%	0.5%	0.3%	1.4%	2.9%
Others (pedagogical, theological & vocational (arts, sports) high schools)	0.8%	0.6%	0.4%	1.2%	3%
Total	29.7%	18.8%	6.2%	45.2%	100%

Data Analysis

Motivations for lifelong learning are the reasons leading the participants to enroll in lifelong education courses. The research results regarding these aspects are presented in table 5. This table shows the major groups of reasons openly expressed by the participants, also highlighting the hierarchy of their importance.

Many participants (24.38%) have indicated as the main *motivation* for attending these training programs the opportunity to improve their knowledge on teaching - learning - evaluation of pupils belonging to national minorities. By participating in this training program, teachers can keep up with the latest news, can become students once

again. Meanwhile, participants (13.25%) are stimulated by the possibility to assimilate new methods, techniques and effective and innovative ways of working with Roma, Hungarian or German children. Many of the participating teachers (13.04%) are looking for self-improvement, professional progress, skills and knowledge development.

Table 5. Hierarchy of the reasons for teachers' participation in training programs

The reasons expressed by teachers for attending training programs	Option 1 (%)	Option 2 (%)	Option 3 (%)	Total (%)
Accumulation of new and applicable knowledge, skills, experience, information	11.43	7.56	5.39	24.38
New methods, techniques and styles of teaching (learning) minorities the Romanian language	6.00	5.06	2.19	13.25
Lifelong education, professional and personal development, training, advancement	6.55	3.66	2.83	13.04
Prize (financial motivation)	0.61	2.13	5.97	8.71
Exchange of experience ideas, practices; interaction with fellow teachers/ trainers, networking	0.70	3.17	3.41	7.28
Access to the materials made available (online, audio, video, written, etc.)	1.31	3.44	1.92	6.67
Transferability of knowledge/methods/teaching skills, gaining a new vision on teaching	1.55	2.01	2.01	5.58
Curiosity	2.44	1.25	1.10	4.78
Transferable credits	0.34	1.49	1.61	3.44
Course content	1.13	1.31	0.55	2.99
Difficulties in teaching minorities the Romanian language due to lack of teaching materials	1.43	0.85	0.18	2.47
Previous programs attended	1.01	0.40	0.24	1.65
Course location/ the prestige of Babeş-Bolyai University	0.18	0.61	0.67	1.46
The usefulness/ applicability of the training program	0.55	0.49	0.27	1.31
Recommendations from previous participants in the program	0.61	0.27	0.06	0.94
Efficiency, reliability, quality of the project team, good and open trainers, interactivity	0.27	0.24	0.24	0.76
Gratuity of courses	0.06	0.27	0.12	0.46
Diploma/ certificate issued	0.03	0.15	0.15	0.34
Interactive, useful activities that include adaptation of learning content to the new requirements	0.15	0.12	-	0.27
Professionalism of trainers	-	-	0.12	0.12
Re-experiencing student life	-	-	0.06	0.06
Critical thinking	0.03	-	-	0.03
Total	36.38	34.49	29.13	100

Teachers' main motivational dimensions may be revealed by analyzing their satisfaction with the training program they have attended. There are four main dimensions that outline their perception on the satisfaction generated by the courses organized by Babeş-Bolyai University. They have been identified using Factor Analysis – using as extraction method the Principal Component Analysis. These components have been named: content of lectures (LECT), timetable (TIME), other materials and information (MAT) and administrative issues (ADM). These four components explain 65.5% of the total variance. KMO test (0.923, chi square 11275.520) and Bartlett's test of sphericity (df = 153, sig = 0) confirm model's reliability. Therefore, once again, it is demonstrated that teachers' main interest regarding lifelong education is related to the content of the lectures and of the additional materials (platform, course outline, other information provided). Organizational aspects (timetable and project administration) are considered facilitators for information access.

Table 6. The components of satisfaction resulted by using Factor Analysis

Factors	Component			
	LECT	TIME	MAT	ADM
Information disseminated during lectures.	0.798			
Examples provided by lecturers.	0.778			
Lecturers.	0.752			
Teaching method.	0.743			
Content of formation programs.	0.614			
Power Point presentations.	0.571			
Applicability of the themes chosen.	0.567			
Ending time.		0.822		
Duration of education programs.		0.787		
Starting time.		0.755		
Breaks.		0.666		
Interactions on the platform with the tutors.			0.779	
The platform in itself and its usefulness.			0.732	
Courses materials.			0.716	
Portfolio of materials.			0.603	
Expertise of administrative personnel of the project.				0.845
Seriousness of administrative personnel of the project.				0.823
Project management.				0.788

Notes: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Looking at the top training programs, it is easy to understand what type of information and competences teachers are looking for in continuous training. The major interest of participants is shown towards training programs that enhance their teaching abilities of Romanian to national minorities (P1 – 47.7% and P2 - 8.3%) and towards the inclusion of ICT skills in teaching - learning – evaluation (P11 - 17.3%).

Table 7. The breakdown of respondents by type of training programs attended

Learning program	% of attendants to courses
P1	47.7
P11	17.3
P2	8.3
P4	8.1
P7	6.5
P9	5.1
P3	3.2
P5	1.5
P6	0.8
P10	0.5
Total attendants	100.0

Regarding the *expectations* of those attending the project, a strong divergence of opinions may be noted. The expectations head towards acquiring new teaching tools, techniques and methods that could be used in teaching Romanian language to national minorities. Respondents agree that all instruments - the bank of words, the various new forms of approach, the use and application of ICT in teaching, the didactic films or audio-visual materials find maximum applicability in their classes. Furthermore, teachers express their expectations in terms of different teaching methods and strategies of teaching-learning-examination, specific for teaching Romanian language in classes with students of national minorities.

It is important for them that all these modern and interactive methods enable effective results and appeal to students. Several participants expect to learn practical exercises (case studies etc.) that they can apply, multiply or complete later. Teachers' expectations also refer to the adaptability of new methods at all educational levels - primary, medium and high, to technical or special schools or to training courses for immigrants and minorities. At the same time, expectations refer to finding some "innovative" ideas for teaching, which would support the efficiency of the teaching - learning - evaluation process. Another major hope refers to finding new good practices from fellow teachers' work experience. Other anticipations refer to the possibility to participate in original and practical activities that would help them in the process of teaching, to socializing with colleagues, to identifying new approaches and ways of working with students, etc. Anticipations also relate to organizational aspects. Thus, some respondents hope that these courses would be organized in other locations as well, would not take too long, would be facile and the reward or diploma could be obtained without great effort, while accommodation would be convenient and they would be offered the opportunity to socialize even more.

4. Conclusions

Studying teachers' expectations and motivations can serve to improving future professional and personal development training courses. They can be better adjusted to meet efficiency goals, better tailored to the ideals of various categories

of students. The research reveals that the main motivation and expectation of teachers for participating in training courses is to optimize and modernize their teaching process, to acquire new teaching methods and tools and, in general, to develop their own professional expertise.

The main limitation of this study is that all the respondents are participants to a training program, which increases the homogeneity of the sample and the probability that all of them are interested in professional development. It would be interesting to find out motivations among all teachers, regardless of their previous participation to training courses. Also, since the participation in the project has been motivated by a financial reward, it would be relevant to test the sincerity of the answers. Whether the main motivation is learning, indeed, could be tried by inviting teachers to attend paid courses. Another future research direction is represented by the study of barriers to lifelong learning and of the ways they could be minimized or eliminated.

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