What are the Factors which Affect the Motivation to Learn to Adult Students?

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Abstract

The motivation to learn is very important for adult students. We know that, when there is no motivation to learn, there is no learning. So, it is very important to create an interesting learning climate for adult student. The aim of this paper is to present some of the factors that are influencing adult students' learning motivation and to show the predictive factor to a more significant motivation. The methodology of this paper concerns mainly the quantitative methods. The sample consists of adult students that are frequenting part-time study in some Albanian University in 2011-2012 academic years. The stage sampling is used for the selection of the sample out of the whole population. Statistical analyzes were performed using SPSS program, and more precisely, to predict motivation to learn from other factors, is used multiple regression. In conclusion, from the result it was confirmed that 36 % of the variance in dependent variable, which is motivation to learn, can be predicted from the independent variables that are establishing inclusion for adult students, engendering competence among adult students, developing positive attitude toward learning and enhancing meaning for adult students in the classrooms. The data, also, show that $F (4,302) =43.998$, $p = .000$ and the variable that predicts better motivation to learning for adult students, is their perception of enhancing meaning in the classrooms.

Keywords: The motivation to learn, adult students

1. Introduction

Motivation to learn it is very important for adult students. This is important not only because it apparently improves learning but also because it mediates learning and is a consequence of learning as well. When learners are motivated during the learning process, things go more smoothly, communication flows, anxiety decreases, and creativity and learning are more apparent. Learners who complete a learning experience and leave the situation feeling motivated about what they have learned seem more likely to have a future interest in what they have learned and more likely to use what they have learned (Wlodkowski , 2010). On the other hand, the classrooms environment makes a crucial component of the learning process.

Learning environment is a very important feature for everyone that is involved in learning activities. This becomes more important, when we are talking for adult students, because adult students are more sensitive regarding this element. As long as adult students differ from other category of students, because they are self-directed, they use previous learning to achieve success, they learn best when they perceive the outcomes of the learning process as valuable-contributing to their own development, and they have very different ideas about what is important to learn[1], their learning environment should be students-centered . This term is used to refer to environments that pay careful attention to the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs that learners bring to the educational settings (Wlodkowski, 1999). This term, also, includes teaching practices that have been called "culturally responsive," "culturally appropriate," "culturally compatible," and "culturally relevant" (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The term also fits the concept of "diagnostic teaching", attempting to discover what adult students think in relation to the problem on hand, discussing their misconceptions sensitivity, and giving them situations to go on thinking about which will enable them to readjust their ideas (Bell, 1982).

If we refer, other authors, such as, Wilson, (1996), a learning environment is a place where people can draw upon resources to make sense out of things and construct meaningful solutions to problems. Adult students who are given generous access to information resources, books, print and video materials, and tools such as word possessing programs, e-mail, search tools, etc, are ready to learn something if they are also given proper support and guidance. Under this conception, a learning environment is a place where learning is fostered and supported.

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[1] "Plan instruction for adults, Module N-4" (1990). The national Centre for Research in Vocational Education.

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According to Hanrahan, (1998), the learning environments factors have a very important effect on students' motivation and learning. Quantitative studies have found strong relationship between student's perceptions of the goal orientation and their own use of deep learning strategies. With high school students, are found evidence that the perception of students of their classroom goal orientation affects their beliefs in the relative value of effort and ability, and their use of effective self-regulatory strategies. Similar results were found at university level, when students' perceptions of personal empowerment and lecturer support for autonomy correlated significantly with deep approach to learning. In some survey studies, where the lecturer promoted thoughtfulness in her students by using frequent activities that required higher level thinking and considerable autonomy, the students tended to score higher on a measure of self-regulatory strategies used to monitor understanding and have been more motivated to learn (Hanrahan, 1998). Roth, Rosen and others (1992), cited in Hanrahan (1998), also showed that an explicit "learning" rather than "work" orientation, built an learning environment that improved the level of cognitive skills used by students to achieve their goal of understanding. This was achieved by challenging the students to develop their individual and collective understanding of concepts being studied, using methods such as personal and class writing and mostly students-centered discussion.

Also, according Wlodkowski (2010), organizing the essential motivational conditions in the classrooms is very important, because these conditions are responsible of creating a common culture that all learners in the learning situation can accept. For this author, the essential conditions are as follows:

1. Establishing inclusion: creating a learning atmosphere in which learners feel respectful and connected to one another.
2. Developing attitude: creating a favorable disposition toward the learning experience through personal relevance and choice.
3. Enhancing meaning: creating challenging, thoughtful learning experiences that include learners' perspective and values.
4. Engendering competence; creating an understanding that learners are effective in learning something they value.

As mentioned above, the learning environment is very important because if it created in the right way adult students can be more motivated to learn and can build positive attitude to learning. They can also construct the capability to define their needs, interests, capacities and goals. Adult learners begin to understand themselves objectively and carefully. They begin to respect and understand themselves in the way they are, and they try to improve. Also, adult learners have developed an eligible behavior and respect towards others and this behavior is the crucial point of human relationship. Adult learners now get through to individualize others' ideas and have the capability to challenge with others (Kerman, 1990).

In this logical line, lecturer to improve the learning environment conditions, should eliminate or minimize any negative conditions that surround adult students, ensure successful learning with mastery learning conditions, confronts in the positively way the erroneous beliefs, expectations, and assumptions that may underlie a negative learner attitude, using assisted learning to scaffold complex learning, promoting the learner's personal control of the context of the learning, helping learners accurately attribute their success to their capability, efforts, and knowledge, using relevant models to demonstrate expected learning, using goal-setting methods, making the learning activities an irresistible invitation to learn, and the last but not the least, using brainstorming webs developing and linking new information (Wlodkowski,1999).

The physical environment, in which instruction takes place and the structure of the activities in the course, can also influence learning. People react differently to such factors as room temperature, arrangement of the room, and time of day in which learning activities take place, for example some people prefer early morning versus late in the day. People, also react differently to brightness of the lighting, and sound, such as sound distractions from nearby construction or talking among participant. In addition, adults differ with regard to whether they prefer to work alone or in groups. Fisher (1989) has combined all these factor to depict the various types of preferences that adult may have when they enter in the learning environment.

The aim of this article is to show the relationship between adult students' motivation to learn and their perceptions of the factors that create learning environments in classrooms, such as, establishing inclusion for adult students, engendering competence among adult students, developing positive attitude toward learning and enhancing meaning for adult students.

2. Methodology

2.1 Procedure and sample

This study has been carried out through a quantitative and a qualitative research model. In this paper are presented only the data of the quantitative research. Selection of the sample from the population is made based on the sample stage method. Initially, by means of these methods were selected four higher education institutions in the country and then was selected the sample from the group of adult students that are frequenting the part-time study in these institutions. The main population that served for this sample is made of adult students who are actually frequenting the part-time 2011-2012 academic year of the public educational system in the universities of Tirana, Korça, Elbasan and Durrës. In all the universities there are actually enrolled just 25.000 students for the four years and is also covered a sample of 400 participants from this population (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 1970, p 94).

As mentioned above, the stage probability sample is used to select the sample from this population. It concerns the selection of the sample in stages; that is, taking sample from sample. In other words, with the stage selection sample we select firstly a number of universities at random. Then within the selected universities, we randomly select a number of faculties. After this, even within the selected faculties we randomly pick the years (first year, second year, etc). Finally, we select a number of students out of the studying years. By means of this method is selected even the sample that represents the population features. Out of 400 adult students of the sample, just 130 are men and the other 270 are women, or 32.5 % are men and 67.5 % are women. The largest number of participants, i.e., 73% is between 25-39 years, followed by the 40-49 years old, which comprise 17 %. Then comes the age group up to 24 years with 6%, and in the end is the age group 50-59 years with 3.8 %. Out of 400 participants in the study, 59 % of the adult students make up the group of the married people, i.e., the largest one. Some 33.5% form the group of the unmarried, of whom 5.3 % are living with a partner and two other groups (divorced and widowers) compose only 1% of the sample.

The educational level of the participants in the study varies from 36 % who have got a high school degree to 55% who have got just the university degree and attend this school as a second university and just 8% of them have a master degree. Only 0.5 % of the adult students who are frequenting part-time studies have declared that the specialized courses mean to them a higher level of education. Out of 400 participants, 150 adult students or 37.5% are unemployed, 242 adult students or 60.5 % are employed, and only 8 students or 2% are households.

2.2 Instrument and its reliability

The instrument used for gathering the data is a questioner made of some rubrics. The questionnaire is answered by 400 respondents, who in 35-40 minutes completed it. Initially participants were informed about the purpose of the study and clarified that the data of the survey would be used only for academic purpose. Given that the perception of adult students to the establishment of all inclusive atmosphere in the classrooms, engendering competence among adult students, development of positive attitude toward learning and enhancement of understanding for adult students are the only focus of this article, only these elements of the questionnaire will be represented. Five subscales are designed to measure the perception of adult students regarding the establishment of inclusion, engendering competence, developing positive attitude toward learning and enhancing meaning for adult students and their motivation to learn. Those are set in a scalar form, where students should circle the answer from strongly disagree to strongly agree, according to their level of agreement. Thus, items such as, learners' experiences, their concerns and interests, are used to develop course content, instructor's encouragement to learners' understanding and to reveal different viewpoints, which are designed to measure adult students positive attitude toward learning (Ginsberg &Wlodkowski, 2009).

From the score calculations, for a three item scale, using a response scale from 1 to 5, the minimum value would be 3 and the maximum value would be 15. A mean score of 11.2 or higher indicates high level of positive attitude toward learning. A mean score between 7.1 and 11.1 indicates a mild level of positive attitude toward learning. A mean score below 7 indicates low level of positive attitude toward learning. Furthermore, Cronbach's alfa was run in order to assess internal consistency reliability for each of the four scales used to collect the data. The scale that has measured, perception of adult students for developing positive attitude toward learning, has a good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient reported .85.

Items such as, a lecture, help learners activate prior knowledge. Lectures along with learners, create opportunities for inquiry, investigation, and projects, lectures that providesopportunities for learners to actively participate in challenging way, etc, are designed to measure the perception of adult students for enhancing meaning in classrooms.

For this scale, the lowest possible mean score is 4 and the highest possible mean score is 20. A mean score of 14.7 or higher indicates high level of perceptions of adult students regarding the enhancement of meaning. A mean score between 9.4 and 14.6 indicates a mild level of perceptions of adult students regarding the enhancement of meaning. A mean score below 9.3 indicates low level of perceptions of adult students regarding this item. This scale, has preferable internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient reported .84.

Item such as, students and lecturer have opportunities to learn about each other, course agreements are negotiated, in class is created an environment that helps everyone feel that they belong to the class, etc, are designed to measure perception of adult students for establishing inclusion. A mean score of 11.2 or higher indicates high level of perception of adult students to the establishment of inclusion. A mean score between 7.1 and 11.1 indicates a mild level of perception of adult students to the establishment of inclusion. A mean score below 7 indicates low level of perception of adult students to the establishment of inclusion. This scale has acceptable internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient reported. 7.

Item such as, lecturer clearly communicates the purpose of the lesson, lecturers assess different students differently, lecturers create opportunities for students to make explicit connections between their learning and the real word, etc, are used to create a scale to measure the perception of adult students for engendering competence in classrooms (Ginsberg &Wlodkowski, 2009). This scale has acceptable internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient reported. 72.

3. Data analysis

The data gathered from the survey were transferred into the computer statistical package SPPS. Prior to the revision of the data, assumptions for the statistical analyses were assessed. The data have been examined for normality (skewness and kurtosis), as well as for missing data. A tow –tailed alpha level of .05 was set and used for all statistical tests.

Multiple regression statistical analysis was conduct to assess whether there is a relationship between motivation to learn for adult students and their perceptions of factors that make up the learning environments in classrooms, such as, establishing inclusion for adult students, engendering competence among adult students, developing positive attitude toward learning and enhancing meaning for adult students. The following table provides a summary of variables and the analytic procedures related to the paper question.

Table 1. Paper question, variables, and analytic procedures

Paper Question	Variables	SPSS Procedures
What is the relationship between motivation to learn for adult students and the factors that create learning environments in classrooms?	Establishing inclusion for adult students. -Engendering competence for adult students. -Developing positive attitude toward learning. -Enhancing meaning for adult students.	Multiple Regressions.

3.1 Sources of error

The way this research was carried out intended to minimize deceptive results. However, like most of the studies made in the field of adult education, even this one is self-report based. As a result, the findings depend even on the students' acquisition of the questions in the survey as well as on the degree of sincerity they have completed the instrument with.

3.2 Research ethics

During the implementation of this study, all the stages of research ethics have been followed. It has firstly been taken the permission of the structures in charge of the faculties where the instrument was conducted. Subsequently, a sensitization of the research and its goal was done to the participants before they filled the instrument. They were guaranteed anonymity and asked whether they wanted to participate voluntarily in the study. Furthermore, participants who did not want to be part of the study did not meet the instrument.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 2, illustrates the mean scores and standard deviation regarding some of the variables. Thus, the mean scores for

the perception of adult students for establishing inclusion in classrooms is (M = 4.84, SD = 1.78), their perception for the engendering competence is (M = 10.23, SD =3.63), their perception for developing positive attitude toward learning is (M = 7.49 , SD = 3.10), and their perception for enhancing meaning is (M = 9.78, SD = 2.9).

Table 2. Mean scores and SD for four variables.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Establishing inclusion for AS	360	4.84	1.78
Engendering competence for AS	345	8.91	3.63
Developing positive attitude toward learning	386	7.49	3.10
Enhancing meaning for AS	375	9.78	2.90
Valid N (listwise)	286		

As we can see, from the data the mean scores of perception of adult students for the positive attitude toward learning is 7.49 and this indicate a mild level to their positive attitude toward learning for them. The same situation is for perception of adult students to the enhancement of meaning in classrooms, where the mean score is 9.78 that indicates again a mild level of the perception for this variable. The situation is changed according to other variables, the perception of adult students for establishing inclusion in the classrooms, and the perception of the adult students for engendering competence, where the mean score indicates a low level for adult student's perceptions.

To address the paper question, multiple regression statistical analyses was conducted. This question has explored, if there is any relationship between motivation to learn for adult students and the factors that create learning environments in classrooms. Table 3, indicates that 36.7 % of the variance of students' motivation to learn, according to adult students, can be predicted from the independent variables, which in this case are the perceptions of adult students for establishing inclusion, engendering competence, developing positive attitude toward learning and enhancing meaning.

Table 3. The variance of motivation to learn for adult students.

Model Summary [b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.607[a]	.368	.360	2.39

a. Predictors: (Constant), Enhancing meaning for AS, Establishing inclusion for AS, Engendering competence for AS, Developing positive attitude toward learning

b. Dependent Variable: Motivation to learn

The ANOVA table shows that, the overall model revealed to be statistically significant, $F_{(4, 302)}$ = 43.998, p = .000, adjusted R^2 = .360.

Table 4. The significance for the multiple regression model.

ANOVA [b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1003.459	4	250.865	43.998	.000[a]
	Residual	1721.929	302	5.702		
	Total	2725.388	306			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Enhancing meaning for AS, Establishing inclusion for AS, Engendering competence for AS, Developing positive attitude toward learning

b. Dependent Variable: Motivation to learn

An observation of individual predictor in Table 5, indicates that, perception of adult students for establishing inclusion for adult students (B = .289, p = .000), the perception of adult students for developing positive attitude toward learning (B = .150, p = .021), and the perception of adult students for enhancing meaning (B =.383, p = .000), are significant predictors of adult students' motivation to learn. This suggests that a higher level of perception of adult students for these variables is associated with higher level of motivation to learn. The perception of adult students for engendering competence (B = .06, p = .188), was not significant.

Table 5. The multiple regression model.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.621	.564		4.646	.000
	Establishing inclusion for AS	.289	.080	.172	3.608	.000
	Engendering competence for AS	6.000E-02	.045	.073	1.320	.188
	Developing positive attitude toward learning	.150	.064	.156	2.324	.021
	Enhancing meaning for AS	.383	.072	.372	5.332	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Motivation to learn

The multiple regression equation is:

$\hat{Y}$ = 2.621 + .289 * perception of AS for establishing inclusion + .06*engendering competence for adult students + .150*developing positive attitude toward learning + .383*enhancing meaning for adult students.

From the data of the model is suggested that higher level of the perception of adult students for establishing inclusion, engendering competence for adult students, developing positive attitude toward learning and enhancing meaning, are associated with higher level of motivation to learn for adult students. To each unit increase in perception of adult students toward learning, there is a corresponding increase of .289 in score in motivation to learn. To each unit increase in perception of adult students for engendering competence, there is a corresponding increase of .06 in score in motivation to learn. To each unit increase in perception of adult students for developing positive attitude toward learning, there is a corresponding increase of .150 in score in motivation to learn. To each unit increase in perception of adult students for enhancing meaning, there is a corresponding increase of .383 in score in motivation to learn.

5. Conclusions

In summary, some results can be concluded at the end of this article. From the survey conducted in the population of students, who attend part-time education in some public universities in Tirana, Korça, Elbasan, and Durrës, is drawing a sample of 400 students through the stages sampling method. Out of 400 adult students of the sample, just 130 are men and the other 270 are women, or 32.5 % are men and 67.5 % are women. It is used a Likert scale for gathering the data from the sample. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha was run in order to assess internal consistency reliability for each of the scales used to collect the data. These scales have a good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient reported respectively, .85, .84, .7 and .72. A two tailed alpha level of .05 was set a priori and used for all statistical tests. To answer the question, if there existed any relationship between motivation to learn for adult students and the factors that create learning environments in classrooms, multiple regression analysis has been conducted. From this statistical analysis is revealed that there exists a positive relationship between perception of adult students for establishing inclusion, engendering competence for adult students, developing positive attitude toward learning and enhancing meaning in the classrooms and their motivation to learn. From the results it was confirmed that 36 % of the variance in dependent variable, which is motivation to learn, can be predicted from the independent variables that are establishing inclusion for adult students, engendering competence among adult students, developing positive attitude toward learning and enhancing meaning for adult students in the classrooms. The data, also, show that F $(4,302)$ =43.998, p = .000 and the variable that predicts better motivation to learn, is their perception to the enhancement of meaning in the classrooms

for adult students. From this result, is concluded that institutions that are offering this services should be more attentive, and work more to improve learning environment, because all these variables have a strong impact on the motivation to learn for adult students.

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