



Harald Gell

Motivation of Students

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Original Address:

University of Defence
Faculty of Military Leadership
Kounicova 65
662 10 Brno
Czech Republic
<http://www.unob.cz/>

Author:

Harald GELL

Head of the International Office
(Bachelor Studies of Applied Science in Military Leadership)

Army-Colonel
Doctor of Security Research
Master of Science
Master of Business Administration
Master of Security and Defence Management

Burgplatz 1
Theresan Military Academy
AUSTRIA

harald.gell@bmlvs.gv.at

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Abstract:

Within this essay the author combines the theoretical elaborations concerning motivation of students with results from questionnaires conducted with Officers Cadets at the Austrian Theresian Military Academy. Mainly intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors can be identified. Apart from these motivation factors, not only for military education institutions but also for all other institutions which are teaching students, the leadership skills and competences apart from special knowledge of lecturers seem to be important to motivate them. In the conclusions the author gives some proposals which steps must be done to motivate students and consequently to increase their performance.

Keywords: Intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation. Leadership. Officers' skills.

Abstrakt:

V rámci příspěvku autor kombinuje teoretická rozvinutí o motivaci studentů s výsledky z dotazníků kadetů na rakouské Tereziánské vojenské akademii. Věnuje se hlavně vnitřním i vnějším motivačním faktorům. Kromě těchto motivačních faktorů, se zdají být důležité i schopnosti a dovednosti velení a řízení, kromě odborných znalostí lektorů, aby byli studenti motivováni, a to platí nejen pro vojenské vzdělávací instituce, ale i pro všechna jiná zařízení, která vyučují studenty. Na závěr autor uvádí některé návrhy postupů, které jsou nutné uskutečnit k motivaci studentů a tím následně zvýšit jejich výkonnost.

Klíčová slova: Vnitřní motivace. Vnější motivace. Vedení. Schopnosti důstojníků.



1 Introduction

“People often say that motivation doesn’t last. Well, neither does bathing – that’s why we recommend it daily” (Ziglar, n. d.). The topic *“motivation of students”* should be taken seriously by all those persons who are being responsible for education – independently which echelon and which field of responsibility they have – according to the citation above – on a daily basis.

This short essay leads from some principal motivation theories via the description of methodology to the results of research which are based on past and actual questionnaires conducted with Officer Cadets of the Austrian Theresian Military Academy in April 2015 – to achieve up-dated results for the XXXIII International Colloquium in Brno.

The author would like to express his gratitude to the Faculty of Military Leadership at the University of Defence in Brno – especially to the Dean, Col Assoc. prof. Ing. Vladan Holcner, Ph.D. – for the possibility to participate an event with such an important aspect.



2 Theoretical Part

Taking a closer look at the literature, in principle the subject of motivation can be divided into two parts. **Intrinsic motivation** is the self-desire to seek out new things and new challenges, to analyse one's capacity, to observe and to gain knowledge (Ryan & Deci, 2000). **Extrinsic motivation** comes from influences outside of the individual. This could be a motivation to earn more money or the fear of punishment in a case that the expectations are not fulfilled (Dewani, 2013).

Inside military forces – consequently also inside their education institutions – it seems obviously that because of their well elaborated punishment systems the extrinsic motivation is the more important one. **What a misunderstanding!** The topic “*motivation of students*” implies behaviours concerning reaching learning outcomes during study periods and not behaviours concerning military training where extrinsic motivation may have a place under certain circumstances. We also have to think about that students inside military education institutions are not differing from other – civilian – education institutions, they are just a mirror of the society.

Taking into consideration **Maslow's hierarchy of needs** (Maslow, 1943) of human beings – it seems to be clear that the intrinsic motivation is the only one which creates the basis for long-lasting and therefore more effective motivation – meaning motivation of students to achieve proper learning outcomes. The figure hereinafter shows Maslow's hierarchy created in 1943.

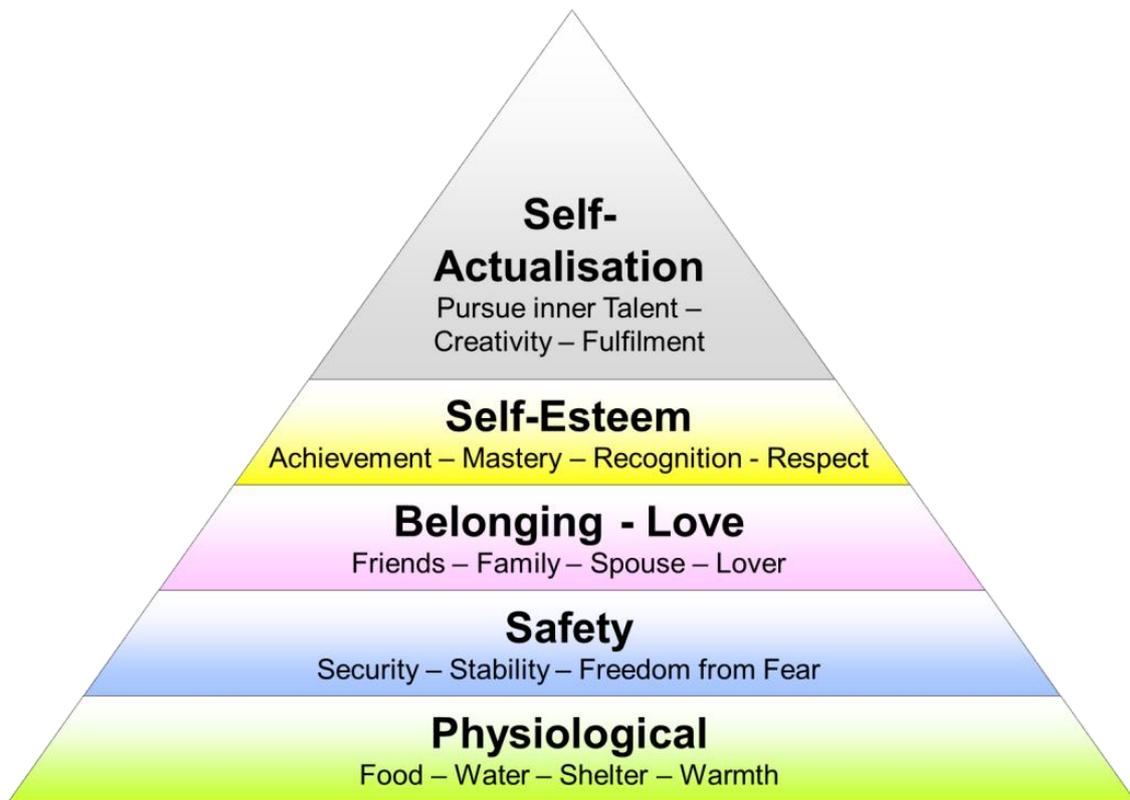


Figure 1: Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Whereas responsible persons for students' education for the first three steps of Maslow's hierarchy of needs may create an ideal organisational frame, for the last two steps the intrinsic motivation has an extreme importance. If talking about motivation of students within this context – actually we all mean **stimulating of students' interest in the subject matter** (Nilson, 2010). On the other hand, if we just concentrate our means onto intrinsic motivation, is there still a place for giving grades within our study systems – in the sense of having fear from punishments, in the sense of extrinsic motivation?

Nilson describes some credible theories of motivation, these theories the author simplifies in a table hereinafter:

Theory	Positive motivation	Negative motivation
Behaviourism	Students are rewarded for their behaviour.	Students are punished for their behaviour.
Goal orientation	Students are allowed to take risks and make mistakes without any disadvantages, therefore they can improve.	Students work just for good grades, they are afraid of mistakes and this creates insecurity.
Relative value of the goal	Integrate students into the learning process; give them responsibility – even to the course content – and increase social learning.	Make the content more stimulating, interesting and emotionally engaging – from the lecturer’s point of view.
Expectancy of goal achievement	Give students tools – e.g. learn how to learn – to achieve their goals. Do not overwhelm them. Give students the feeling that lecturers like them.	Lectures which are just requesting reproduction of knowledge without critical thinking.

Table 1: Positive and negative theories of motivation – simplified by the author.

Especially the positive motivation of the last theory – “*give students the feeling that lecturers like them*” – forges a bridge to one of the most numerous researches which has ever been done within this perspective. John Hattie, a professor of the University of Melbourne, issued the study “*Visible Learning*” – he based his results concerning the question “what is a good lecture?” on researches with **250 million** students (Hattie, 2008). He comes to the conclusion that the lecturer has the vital impact onto students’ performance – all the other circumstances are not that important. In the military context this means that **leadership skills of lecturers** must be the priority number one when talking about motivation of students.

The following table describes Hattie’s results concerning increasing fruitful frames for and motivation of students:

What really helps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback of the Lecturer. • Problem-solving Lessons. • Advanced specialised education for lecturers. • Programmes to stimulate reading. • Trust between Lecturer and Student.
What helps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular performance review. • Pre-study assistance measures. • Lecturer-managed lessons. • Additional offers for outstanding Students.
What helps a little bit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small groups. • Expensive equipment of the classroom. • Discovering learning. • Homework.
What does not help but does not harm either	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open lessons. • Inter-year lessons. • Web-based teaching and learning.
What harms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repetition of years. • Excessive watching television. • Long breaks (summer holidays).

Table 2: Hattie's results listed according to priorities.

Taking the above mentioned theories into consideration, of course we have to think about different circumstances at different education institutions and different cultures (Dambeck, 2013) and we have to find the golden mean, but in all cases – when it comes to motivation of students – the lecturer and his/her leadership performance is the central point. That is why we have to concentrate our means onto the education of the educators – the increasing motivation of students will be the logical result then.



3 Methodology

Literature does not come to a clear conclusion concerning the relationship between intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and students' performance (Nilson, 2010). Because of that the author elaborated results from questionnaires conducted with students of the Theresan Military Academy for this essay.

3.1 Skills of Officers teaching at the institution

The author asked five different classes of the Master and Bachelor Programme Military Leadership at the Theresan Military Academy which of the leadership skills of Officers teaching at the institution are important. The Officer Cadets had total freedom for their answers; the only task was to list them according to priorities. Out of 1,308 answers given by 327 Officer Cadets the author clustered the answers and listed them according to a percentage from zero to 100 percent.

3.2 Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors

Just some weeks before the start of the colloquium in Brno, the author asked representatives from three classes of the Bachelor Programme Military Leadership at the Theresan Military Academy which factors motivate them. The questionnaire was to be answered by one branch- representative from each class – in total by 21 Officer Cadets. They had a total freedom for their answers; in some cases the author asked them verbally more deeply to be sure what they exactly meant. The answers were to be given concerning the motivation before the study – meaning what motivated them to start the education to become an Officer – and during the education – meaning which factors motivate them to increase their performance. Afterwards, the answers were clustered and separated into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors.

4 Results of Research

4.1 Skills of Officers teaching at the institution

In chapter 2 of this essay the author describes the importance of leadership skills of lecturers. Out of all the answers given by the Officer Cadets just 36 skills could be clustered which are listed in the following table according to priorities.

01 Special knowledge and ability	13 Inspiring confidence	25 Authority
02 Expert in knowing people	14 Fairness	26 Life experience
03 Power to convince	15 Responsible-minded	27 Reliability
04 Resilient and calm	16 Motivator	28 Intelligence
05 Decision-making ability	17 Directness	29 Self-criticism
06 Role-model	18 Loyalty	30 Humour
07 Charism	19 Comradeship	31 Command language
08 Analytical thinking	20 Discipline	32 Creativity
09 Honesty	21 Sportsmanship	33 Self-reliance
10 Purposefulness	22 Behaviour	34 Ability to teach
11 Self-assurance	23 Courage	35 Moral & ethics
12 Flexibility	24 Capacity for teamwork	36 Punctuality

Table 3: Answers of Officer Cadets concerning leadership skills of Officers teaching at the institution.

If now the importance of given answers is listed we can see that for Officer Cadets – being students of a higher education programme at the same time – the first eleven skills have a very important significance. Because of better overview just these eleven skills are shown in the following figure 2:

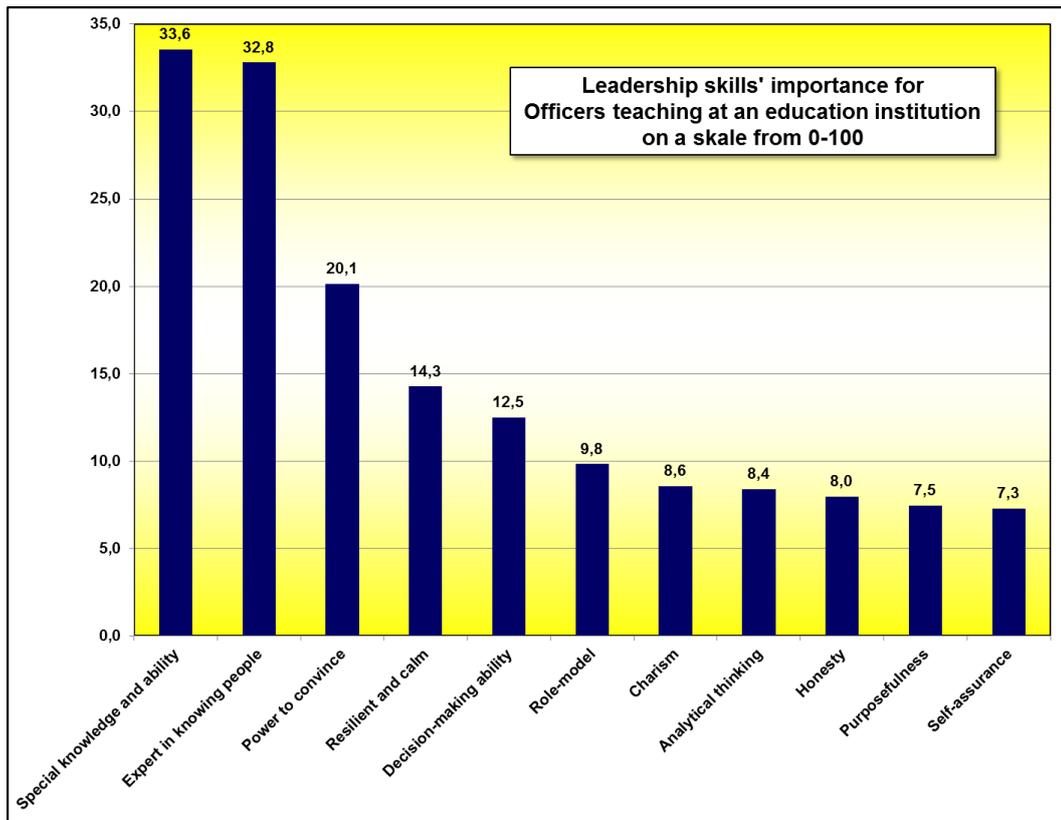


Figure 2: Importance of leadership skills from students' point of view.

We can see that for students a good lecturer should have a variety of skills – special knowledge is important but it is not the only ability, other skills and competences – especially those ones which military personnel subordinate under the term **leadership** – are important as well.

These results lead to the theory of most of the European Basic Officer Education Institutions, namely that Officers must be educated in four basic competences (Heyse & Erpenbeck, 2004). If one of the competences is missing, an Officer Cadet cannot graduate. These four competences are:

- Personal competence.
- Special knowledge
- Activity and acting competence.
- Social and communicative competence.



Having all these competences is the best pre-condition to act as a lecturer who has the ability to motivate students.

4.2 Intrinsic motivation factors

The first part of the answers refers to those motivation factors which moved the students to start the education to become an Officer. Logically, all of these factors are intrinsic ones, since there are rarely situations where aspirants are punished if they do not start the education.

The author could not identify certain priorities out of the answers; therefore, the following table is listed according to an alphabetical order:

Accept a challenge
Climbing up a hierarchy
Convey interest in military matters
Interest to take over responsibility
Knowing what a Student can expect
Occupational safety
Possibilities to go abroad
Possibility to know more than the average population
Reputation of the Officer's profession in society
Thirst for adventure
Varying education

Table 4: Answers of Officer Cadets concerning motivation factors to start the education.

The question “*what motivates students during their education*” resulted just in a few intrinsic answers, more answers the author received referring to extrinsic ones. The intrinsic ones are listed in the following table – again in alphabetical order:

Appreciation of performance
Comradeship
Imitation of a role-model
Ranking list among the students
Taking over of responsibility
Variety of the education

Table 5: Answers of Officer Cadets concerning motivation factors during their education.

4.3 Extrinsic motivation factors

All of the few extrinsic motivation factors which the Officer Cadets mentioned can be summarized as de-motivation factors. Therefore, one of the fastest avenues of approach to motivate students could be to eliminate those negative factors.

The extrinsic motivation factors are listed in the following table according to alphabetical order:

Additional tasks not coordinated with the study programme
Just a means to an end of Officer education
Lack of responsibility
Mental underload

Table 6: Answers of Officer Cadets concerning extrinsic motivation factors.



5 Conclusions

Within this essay the author tries to combine the theoretical elaborations concerning motivation of students with results from questionnaires conducted with Officers Cadets. Following the results, some proposals can be made how to motivate students for the purpose of increasing their performance.

- 1) **Educate the educators:** Just to have an excellent knowledge about a certain topic in a special field is not enough. Professors, Teachers, Lecturers, Officers need more. In general it can be summarized as a mix of competences – just one of them is special knowledge. Other competences aim at social ones; especially the trust between students and lecturers seems to be an important one. Moreover, lectures should be seen and act as role-models – then it will be much easier for them to motivate the students. Leadership skills – in the military context this is more seen as the ability to lead troops in combat – are essential for university lecturers as well. If all these – mentioned before – a lecturer does not have, it should be logical that he or she must undergo an on-going education to reach all these competences. Then it will be easy to motivate students.
- 2) **Give students room for achieving their intrinsic motivation:** In this context the handover of responsibility seems to be important – especially for future military Officers. It goes hand in hand with (new) learning methods, even to such methods where the students are allowed to take over the role as a lecturer. A proper feedback of the experienced lecturer is a must to increase students' performance for the future.
- 3) **Eliminate de-motivation:** First of all the institutions have to know which the real de-motivating factors are. In all higher education institutions evaluation systems exist as part of the quality assurance system. The question is – is this enough to discover the de-motivating factors? Only trust and open-minded talks may help – the students have to have the



feeling not to face negative consequences if they are telling the truth. As soon as the de-motivating factors are identified, it is the fastest way to motivate students because of eliminating them.

Finally, it can be said that motivation of students always requires a bunch of actions to be taken to increase their performance. But that is why our jobs at education institutions exist – **we are there for our students!**

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