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**MOTIVATIONAL PERSISTENCE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON  
SPORT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS**

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**Abstract**

This article analyses the issue of school and sport success from the perspective of motivation, especially the element of motivational persistence. Starting from the premise that motivation generates behaviour and action, that it can be measured in terms of the effort that a student makes in order to achieve learning goals, we are concerned with the factors that determine the maintenance of optimal motivational level over time required to achieve the goal, under the name of motivational persistence. It is considered that a strong motivation is not enough in the learning process, proving that it can diminish and even disappear before reaching the goal, above all, there must be an even stronger element, motivational persistence. Numerous studies address the issue of motivational persistence. The elements related to this subject are also one of the areas of personal concerns, as points of interest and research in the doctoral thesis that is underway, which has as a pillar element, school and sport success.

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## 1. Introduction

The analysis of the concept of school success preoccupied specialists, teachers, theorists of the field of education, representing the essence of a continuous and lasting process, that of school education, in which the student is mainly involved, as a direct beneficiary. Wide sphere of meanings it justifies the existing preoccupations in the specialized literature, for the conceptual clarification. The involvement of the pedagogical and psycho-social dimension does not allow outlining its essence in the lines of a single definition.

If we accept success as the result of self-realization, against the background of a physical, mental effort, with emotional, volitional, affective implications, all mobilized by the clear existence of purpose and objectives, we can accept scholar success as the result of students' school self-achievement, and sports success the result of sports self-achievement.

We therefore include a whole set of defining elements for scholar and sport success, such as the development of intellectual abilities, the formation of motor and theoretical skills and abilities, the shaping and expression of personality traits, the achievement of pursued performance standards, the development of basic motor skills specific to sport, the ability to apply the knowledge acquired based on their understanding, etc.

This article brings theoretical references on the factors that can determine scholar and sports success, with a mainly reference on motivating elements, especially aspects related to motivational persistence. These two types of success, scholar and sport, can be harmoniously combined in vocational sport schools, where some students are included in the categories of performance, scholar sport practice, pursuing a dual orientation focused on success - scholar and sport.

The doctoral thesis that is in progress includes an important chapter that debates the issue of motivational persistence in the process of achieving success in school-sport activities. It is a factor of great importance, necessary to support any long process. Thus, we realised a study, based on observation, involving students from sport vocational high school, through which we observed the relationship between maintaining motivational persistence and success in the proposed task, being focused on the success of achievement of the certification exam of professional competencies. Final year students are involved in an exam for the certification of professional skills, which includes two tests - a practical test, from the technique and tactics of the sport practiced, and a theoretical oral test, which involves the presentation of a theoretical work on a topic of interest to the student. The process of accomplishing the work is a sustained approach, which involves an interest maintained during a school year. As a tutor, I was able to observe the students' behaviour, regarding their involvement in this process, the moments of enthusiasm, confidence, or, due to disappointment, the tendencies to give up, lack of motivation. Obviously, in all this approach where two central factors teacher-student are involved, a central question arises - *How can we maintain an optimal level of motivational persistence so that we do not give up?*

## 2. Literature Review

Early literature considered the scholar success as a superior performance in educational activities represented by knowledge or by achieving the goals of education.

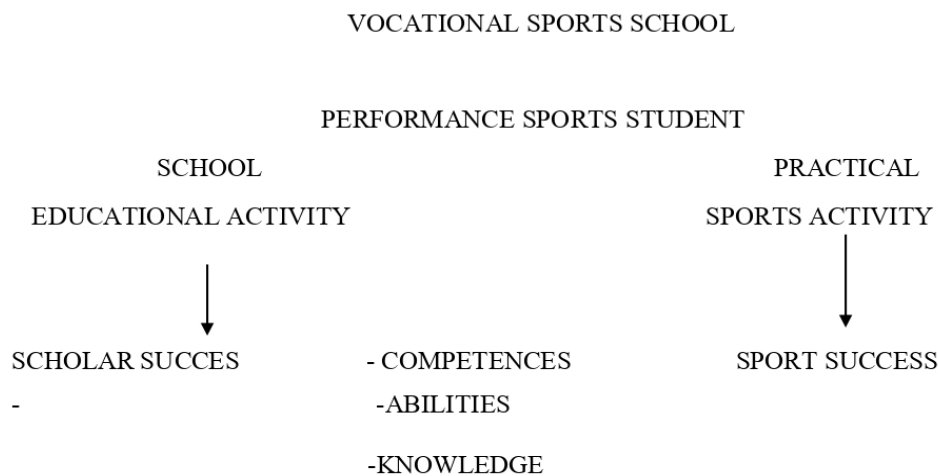
Kalet et al. (2006) in the study “Defining, Navigating, and Negotiating Success”, state that “success was seen as having options while maintaining a consistent awareness of and loyalty to one's own goals and priorities” (p. 921).

York et al. (2015) contradict the previous theories according to which scholar success can be interpreted only in terms of grades and results obtained. They identify eight key elements that define the concept from a broader perspective – “academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational outcomes, and post-college performance” (p. 5).

Specialists in the field of education explained the concept in terms of progress made by students, which is not unanimously accepted, other theorists consider progress just a determining factor, which influences scholar success but does not identify with it. Thus, progress implies an evolution, a process of continuous development that may or may not be completed by scholar or sport success by achieving / or not the performance objectives initially set.

Nowadays, literature presents the concept of scholar success even from a pragmatic perspective, a more practical one, referring to the concrete aspect of the applicability of the elements, competencies or abilities that determine school success, but which are also reflected in the extracurricular and post-school sphere. It is considered that remaining at the level of school boundaries, we could only talk about scholar achievement, in addition to them, the implementation and therefore the use of the entire report of acquisitions and skills, allow overcoming the sphere of success, reaching a higher level of school success, with consequences and influences on quality of life.

The multiple interpretations of this broad concept give opportunity to discover similarities with the interpretations attributed to sport success. There are two areas, seemingly distinct but which often overlap the meanings of understanding, having the psychic and motor activities cantered on the student. Sport schools complete the concept of success, offering students the opportunity to practice high-sport-performance, and the possibility of crowning this sports success with the scholar one.



**Figure 1.** The relationship between school success and sports success

Sport success can be also analysed in terms of the level of sports performance at which the student is, and we can relate it to the results obtained in competitions. Performance in sports, whether in school or professional, involves the provision of a motor activity, systematic and continuous, whose efficiency is also materialized by the concrete results obtained in competitions, which can be converted into sport success. Thus, the profile of the student enrolled in vocational sport schools, allows the harmonious combination of these two forms of success, thus becoming the expression of a unique profile, competed by the sustained effort of motor activities.

The way to success, of any nature, be it scholar or sport, is often difficult, with obstacles that need to be overcome, involving a number of factors that can influence the flow of the way. Through analyses, comparisons and similarities, we appreciate that the external and internal influences that can occur on the student in the process of achieving a goal, largely coincide for both scholar success and sport success. We specify in the following lines some of these factors:

1. *biological factors* - the health condition of the sports student, chronic diseases or physiological conditions, nervous disorders, rapidity of nerve impulse transmission, synapse quality, muscle composition, etc.

2. *factors of a psychological nature*

- i. psychic peculiarities - attitudes, interests, temperament, level of intelligence
- ii. aspiration level - the will to learn, train
- iii. activity disorders, fatigue, stress, lack of interest, apathy, negligence
- iv. psychic phenomena such as attention qualities and language

3. *factors of socio-cultural nature*-group of affiliation, family psycho-socio-cultural environment (support, involvement, family attitude towards supporting peculiarities and sports activities)

4. *factors of pedagogical nature*-didactic style of teaching, evaluation, sport training -design of learning sequences and applying, sport training -interested in the student's scholar and sport progress - interested in the student's school and sport results.

All these influences, in one form or another, during the beneficiary's activity in school or sport in the form of support or, on the contrary, a limiting factor. Although these elements are known and presented in the profile literature, still above them, considering the particularities of these two scholar and motor activities, with the imposition of an effort proportional to the value of the targeted goal, we try to find answers to this question-*What determines students to engage in such activities?* One of these answers could be their motives, its intensity and its significance for the student. Thus, the motivational power of the existing motive intervenes.

The motif is the so-called "*WHY*", the biological, social, emotional and cognitive driving force that pushes the individual to action. The motif is the specific building block of the human personality. Extensive studies analyse this concept from the purpose to find out what initiates a behaviour, what maintains it and for how long. Specialists, over the time, analyses the influence determination between nature of a motif and the level of one's effort and its intensity while acting to reach a goal.

More recent research in the field psycho- pedagogy aims at the relationship between environmental influences, experiences and actual action, which are based on implicit motives (Hofer & Chasiotis,

2003). These are attributed to intrinsic motivation being rendered by affective elements that generate attention goal-oriented, with the possibility of maintaining it in the long run. Explicit motives, explicitly related to extrinsic motivation, belong to the side of the conscious, without necessarily including implicit tendencies, pursuing concrete goals, materialized immediately after reaching the goal.

Both scholar and sport success depend on motivational factors, especially the element of motivational persistence. What determines the sport student to maintain interest, not to give up on the path of accomplishing the intended task is precisely this persistence, depending on the level at which the student is focused in a time frame necessary to achieve the goal.

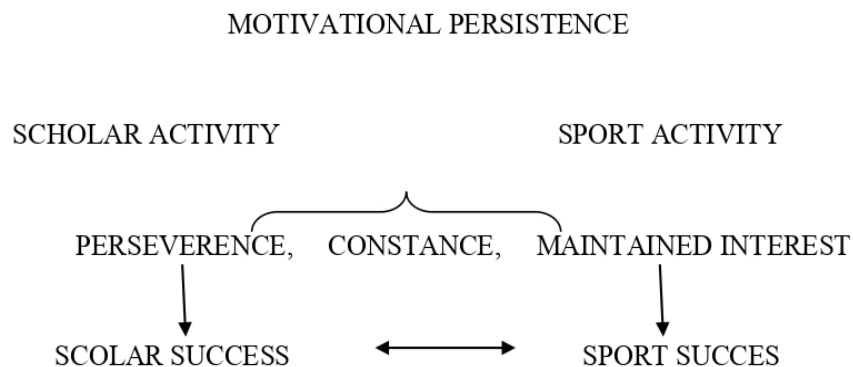
Along with guidance and effort, persistence is the third characteristic of motivation. This refers to constancy, perseverance, maintaining interest in adopting a behaviour until the fulfilment of the pre-determined task.

The involvement of students in successful sport activities, takes long-term engagement for success and achievement of objectives, organized on a stage of training, which determines progress, evolution, over a long period of time. In this context, maintaining motivational persistence at an optimal level is a condition for success. When we analyse the sports success of students in vocational schools, we have to admit that the aim of getting a good result, recognized in a sport competition, it is not enough. It is necessary for the student to take on the long process of preparation, to accept the physical effort taken until exhaustion, and most importantly, not to give up.

Equally, long-term scholar success, measured, for example, in the results obtained at the baccalaureate exam, involves an assumed school process, with sustained interest, constant towards the final performance pursued, which is subject to motivational persistence.

The relationship between scholar success and motivational persistence has been analysed, during the time, by many authors, appreciating the fact that the more motivated a person is based on the intensity of reasons, the stronger and longer the effort will be, and therefore the more intense the motivational persistence will be (Constantin, 2008, p. 34)

By analogy, the above theory also works in the case of performance sport-school activities, which require persistence and behaviour of the *CAN DO* type (Constantin, 2008), maintaining in the sphere of interest the final goal pursued, regardless of the time required on the path of motor training, to achieve the goal-*GOAL STRIVING* (Constantin, 2008).



**Figure 2.** Implications of motivational persistence

The author Sas (2002) presents the success in sport, in terms of motivational persistence and orientation towards objectives or towards one's own person. Thus, students oriented to the task, accept hard work, want self-improvement, have an optimal level of motivation that gives them a good persistence. Most often high-level sport performance is achieved in these cases. On the other hand, other - person - oriented sports students, appreciate success in comparison to others, outperforming others, and an interest in recognizing the status and value of others.

Motivational persistence in the case of motor activities can be supported by a variety of reasons widely debated by the author Bouet since the year 1969. His conclusions are still relevant today, as follows:

- A. MOTOR NEEDS
  - the need to consume energy
  - the need to move
- B. SELF-AFFIRMATION
  - aspects of self-affirmation
  - favorable conditions for self-affirmation
- C. SEARCH FOR COMPENSATION
- D. SOCIAL TRENDS
  - the need for affiliation
  - the desire for integration
- E. INTEREST FOR COMPETITION
  - the need for success
  - the need to compare with others
  - the need to oppose another
  - the unforeseen desire
  - the pleasure of experiencing the tension of the contest
- F. DESIRE TO WIN - desire to assert oneself, success, patriotism
- G. ASPIRATION TO BECOME A CHAMPION - self-affirmation, material interests
- H. AGGRESSIVENESS AND COMBATIVITY - adversity and combativeness
- I. LOVE OF NATURE-fight against nature, contemplation of nature
- J. TASTE OF RISK - the game of life, the need to be in dangerous situations, the desire to show courage
- K. ATTRACTION TO ADVENTURE - the desire for the unforeseen and to solve quiet situations

The existence of motives, acts and triggers the processes of will. In this regard, (Constantin, 2008) presents motivational persistence as a stable feature of the conative system, as a predisposition of a person to stay motivated with a dual orientation:

- to maintain and accept the effort needed to achieve the goal
- to renew personal resources to overcome obstacles

With strict reference to scholar and sports activities, in which students from vocational-sports schools are involved, we agree that the high level of willpower allows accepting and maintaining an optimal mental and motor effort to achieve success.



**Figure 3.** The inner action

The evolution of research in the analysis of the relationship between motivational persistence - scholar and sport success, highlights the element of multifactorial conditioning. However, it is equally relevant to investigate the analysis of the possibilities of measuring this concept.

In 1962, Feather presented two directions for measuring persistence, both of a quantitative nature:

1. The frequency with which a person carries out actions to solve tasks, without abandoning the cause or before moving on to another cause, amid diminished initial interest.
2. The temporal indicator appreciated by the duration accepted for the involvement until the fulfilment of the final goal.

In 2008, Constantin presents the PM3 questionnaire, for the evaluation of motivational persistence, which includes 8 factors of analysis-effort, confidence, perseverance, coping, organization, concentration, obstacle, ambition. The result provides qualitatively valuable information on the strength of a person's commitment to goal-centred tasks. The scale for measuring motivational persistence was taken over and adapted by several researchers. Numerous recent studies apply this scale out of a purpose to research the persistence factor. For example, in the academic year 2015-2016, the authors Cenberci and Beyhan (2016) applied the scale to a sample of 286 students. They started with the central question-What level of motivational persistence must reach the students in order to achieve success? The answer was expected to clarify the chances of student's success, in successfully completing their studies.

It is considered that the field of motivational persistence is not yet sufficiently explored, its measurement, the factors that maintain it, its implications on behaviour, are still the levers to be researched. All these elements juggle the general concept of success, which leads us to appreciate this term as a universal element, closely related to the motivation for achievement, while remaining devoid of a single definition.

### **3. Research Method**

The following research methods were used: observation, conversation, and interview. Our investigative efforts included 90 students at a Vocational Sport High School.

### **4. Analyses and Findings**

Carrying out the work of professional skills certification thesis involves a correct, logical and well-organized approach over time, involves interest from the student and the will to complete the work start-

ed. What can determine students to get actively involved and maintain motivational persistence, is the purpose of this approach – obtaining the professional qualification, level 4 sport instructor. Of the students observed, 80% went through the process of successful work due to constant correlation of their work with its finality, they want their professional qualification, and find it useful after completing their studies. Of these, 60% consider that they might use it in the field of work at some stage, others 20% consider that they want this qualification even if, for the moment, they are not sure that they will practice according to it. 15% of the students had a moment of falling, of disappointment, of low motivation, of lack of confidence that they can complete this approach. Through positive influences, continuous motivation, encouragement, they managed to complete, to achieve their goal. The satisfaction of success was felt at higher levels by these students, precisely due to experiencing the moments of balance during the process. 5% gave up due to external influences and due to the fact that they did not find utility in the qualification they were to receive.

Professional qualification is, surely, a form of school success for students in vocational sport high schools. It is the culmination of work, of both, sport activity and the school one, materialized in obtaining the professional qualification. This approach could not be accomplished without a good motivational persistence of the students.

## 5. Conclusion

The analysis of scholar and sport success from the perspective of motivational persistence offers multiple reference directions. We appreciate the opinion of the authors Duda and Nicholls (1992) who argue that in the relationship of motivational persistence with success, a primary factor is the personal interest. Scholar activities and sport activities, being distinguished at the base, we still have common elements, one of them being the orientation towards one's own person, own interest. It is, after all, an intrinsic form of action, which seems to bring long-term results, maintaining the student optimal level of interest, well dosed temporally, both in sport and school activities.

Specialists analyze motivation as the most important factor that can generate success in an activity, emphasizing that, of all the components, motivational persistence is the most important.

We conclude that success, in any form, represents the concerns of the education system, effectively involving direct and indirect beneficiaries.

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