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TEACHERS PERSPECTIVE ON THE EFFECTS OF THE
REWARD SYSTEM ON EVALUATION OUTCOMES

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Abstract

Researchers have identified the multiple effects of rewards, but the problem remains open, each teacher making the difficult decision to use or not, the rewards in the classroom. According to the hypothesis of this research, if a reward system is used then students motivation is form and maintain, and that promotes learning or optimal performance in assessments. The first purpose of the research was to identify the teacher's attitude towards rewards, and the second one was to establish the role of reward system on students' motivation to prepare for the assessment. The results indicate that all teachers use some kind of rewards in the classroom. Most teachers believe that rewards improve motivation and help increase active participation and school success. But there are some teachers that do not believe that intrinsic motivation increase as rewards are given. They think that the pupils need feedback, information about their achievements, and rewards do not respond to these needs. Therefore, the reward system does not help to form and maintain motivation that promotes learning or optimal performance in assessments but is used when teachers want to get the type of behavior they want at the time.

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1. Introduction

When they go to school for the first time, the students are completely fascinated by the amazing world they have discovered. They come home with a mind full of new knowledge and connections they made. But when the last bell sounds, the spell is scattered, they not only look school as a chore, but they also consider inferiors to the given task. The child's enthusiasm is killed as a direct result of something that happens in our schools.

Rewards and punishments abound in asymmetric relationships in which a person holds power. More disturbing is that rewards create, or at least exacerbate, this imbalance of power in human relationships.

Many researchers have identified the multiple effects of rewards both on horizontal relationships (with equal people as social status) and on vertical ones (those in which status is different, such as the relationship between teacher and student). But the problem remains open, each teacher making the difficult decision to use or not, the rewards in the classroom.

According to the hypothesis of this research, if a reward system is used then motivation is form and maintain, and that promotes learning or optimal performance in assessments.

1.1. The role of the reward system in improving the outputs of the education system

In school practice, different systems of expressing appreciation of school outcomes are used: praise or critical remarks, as well as various ways of grading (figures, letters, grades, colors). Whatever the scoring system used, these modes of expression are conventional and "are symbols used to evaluate the findings, thus fulfilling several functions: expressing the appreciation of the measured results, enabling students to be qualified, determining the rank of each in the group contributes to the cultivation of students' motivation towards learning, provides pupils with self-assessment of the results and cultivates their self-evaluation capacity" (Cerghit & Radu, 1994, p. 137).

Evaluation, and especially the one that results in student scores, is used to maintain the teacher's illusion of authority. And more frequently, children are judged and compared to others. However, it is obvious that a note or reward can't be communicated only directly so that they can be understood. The child must also be able to explain what he wants to express and to learn to self-appreciate.

"The appreciation made by the teacher, internalized by the student, becomes self-esteem" (Pavelcu, 1968, p. 48). It is considered that the student's action gains a strong emphasis, becomes a piece of motivation, a spring of personality, as well as the prize system of society. It also has the role to specify the norms of exigency and, in particular, the inferior threshold of benefits, giving the student the level of aspiration.

By its effects, the reward, instead of raising, lowers the level reached by the students in the instructive-educational process, because many of them do not learn to know, but to get a reward or a higher score.

1.2. The effects of the reward on student motivation

"From an early age, educational institutions identify and reward those students who demonstrate the greatest potential for academic success" (Ainsworth & Roscigno, 2005, p. 258). However, most

academic institutions fail to identify and develop the skills and potential of talented people among disadvantaged populations.

Two recent studies on primary education have confirmed something that the whole world has already known: rewards are being used constantly in almost every class in an attempt to motivate children and improve their performance. Teachers offers stickers and stars, food and more breaks, notes and awards. New goods are introduced as a reward as the student grows, but also on Skinner's pattern. Often, they are rewarded for notes: a good average means a place on the panel of honor and even money from parents.

When old rewards do not succeed in raising students' motivation and performance, new ones are offered. And when this also turns out to be ineffective, we blame the students, believing that they probably do not have the necessary skills or are too lazy to make efforts.

By controlling students, we force them to accommodate a pre-established school curriculum. We tell them not just what they have to learn, but also how to learn and what they will do if they do not learn or what they receive if they succeed. The tests are used not so much to find out where the student needs help, but to force him to do what they are told. "Rewards, of course, are an ingredient of this bitter stew, but the self-control concept helps us to understand how rewards contribute to turning children who want to learn in tricky funnels with their eyes on the clock" (Kohn, 2018, p. 145).

In Romanian education (but also in Romanian society in general), the usefulness and effectiveness of notation as a positive reinforcement in learning are indisputable. Therefore, we will continue to mention the negative effects of grading, as synthesized by Kohn (1999) in the study "From Degrading to Degrading":

- the grades tend to reduce students' interest in learning, this finding is grounded in more research in the field of motivation psychology, all reaching the same conclusion: the more people get more rewards for what they do, the more they tend to lose interest in what they do.

- grades tend to reduce pupils 'interest in challenging and exciting themes, as students' interest is centered on notes, they will prefer lighter themes and a minimal risk of failure to protect themselves.

- grades tend to affect the quality of student thinking, research in the field demonstrates that students who are scored by a numerical scale are significantly less creative than students who receive a qualitative feed-back.

- the grades are not valid, trustworthy, objective, because they can't say anything about what the student understands or can do about the problems he / she needs with help.

- the grades negatively affect the teacher's relationship with the pupils, but also the relations between the students, because the grades and the charts introduce suspicion, resentment, the spirit of competition that negatively affects cooperation.

- the score strengthens the spirit of competition, and competition adversely affects individual experiences (Stan, 2004, pp. 98-101).

Many evaluation specialists speak of motivation as if they were a single entity - and their recommended practices just put a fine veil over a system of rewards and punishments that make students follow the grades and be less interested in self- itself. If encouraging the desire to learn is a primary goal for us, then the scoring is problematic by its nature.

It follows that evaluation should be done with care and sporadic so that students do not become so preoccupied with their performance (how good they are to something - or worse, how to compare their performance with others) that they do not think to learning proper.

Winett and Winkler (1972) have reviewed chips rewards and other similar incentives in classrooms, and urge us to ask ourselves: "To what extent does it help the behavioral change ... the existing institutional system to achieve its present goals, such as controlling for the sake of control, order and deceptive silence, and so rather than favoring the necessary change instead of favoring it?" (pp. 501-502).

What rewards and punishments can produce is called temporary obedience. With them we buy obedience, but if we are concerned about what kind of people our children will become, then there are no compromises. Praises, privileges, and punishments can temporarily change behavior, but they can't change the person who behaves like this - at least not as we want.

The 21st century is the century of knowledge-based society, as stated by the representative documents of some European and international institutions and organizations. The skills required for the individual are different and the priorities at European level have changed. In this context, there is a need to educate and form differently. The school assumes a very high social responsibility. It must contribute to the improvement of the quality of social life, and the social life, in turn, has the obligation to confirm the axiological code of the school and the criteria of the school type assessment. Even if schooling does not provide a sufficient condition to avoid risks, the school contributes to diminishing them. It is possible for a higher-level holder not to find a convenient job, but it is certain that without a diploma the chances are smaller.

2. Problem Statement

The student motivated with the grade, the appreciation, the reward will find harder internal motivations to do something for himself and for the others. He will be less and less curious, will be less willing to search, seek, discover, will not even bother to discover his own interests. A grown child becomes an adult rather interested in the salary he can get through his profession, and not in what he can really do in his field. He will become a non-liberal man and therefore unkind and joyless.

Last but not least, if the student learn for grades or appreciation, it will be difficult to transition to intrinsic interest. But the more difficult it is to unleash the gold stars and sweets, the more imperative we are to do.

This research is based on two considerations, namely:

- 2.1. The reward system can greatly influence the level of students motivation.**
- 2.2. Primary school teachers have different views on the use of grades and rewards as a way of reflecting school outcomes.**

3. Research Questions

In line with the methodological problem statement and the purpose of the study, we have formulated the following questions:

- 3.1. The use of rewards can lead to mistrust and the lack of motivational stimulation of students?**
- 3.2. Evaluation accurately reflect students' performance?**
- 3.3. Rewards affect the teacher relationships with students? Or the relationships between students?**

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research is the study of the role of the rewards in the appreciation of the learning outcomes from the perspective of the primary school teachers.

- 4.1. One purpose of the present research was to identify the teachers attitude towards rewards.**
- 4.2. A second purpose was to determine the effect of the rewards on students' motivation to prepare for the assessment.**

5. Research Methods

Research methodology combines qualitative and quantitative perspectives that consist in collecting data.

These methods aim at investigating the specific aspects of the primary school teachers' perspective on the role of rewards system in outcomes evaluation.

The main instrument used to test the hypotheses was questionnaire survey, but also other methods, such as observation, conversation, the statistical mathematical method.

These methods investigated the specific aspects of primary school teachers' perspective on the role of rewards in getting the desired outcomes, as well as their effects on student motivation.

5.1. Quantitative methods

The questionnaire has a standardized character, the questions are clearly formulated, as well as their number and order; the number of persons with certain characteristics (sex, age, level of training, etc.) to whom the questions are addressed is established, without being able to intervene or deviate from this scheme of organization.

The first step consisted in the questionnaire analysis. The questionnaire survey aimed at gathering information on the attitude of teachers and pupils on the reward system applied in the classroom, on their role in motivating students and improving the outcomes. Two questionnaires were developed: one for pupils (first, second, third and fourth grades) and another for teachers in elementary education

The questionnaire applied to the students comprises 12 closed-ended questions with a single answer or multiple choice

Teachers' Questionnaire includes 12 single-choice or multiple-choice questions.

5.2. Qualitative methods

Observation allows for the intentional pursuit of the behavior of the educational subjects and the context situation in which they occurred, as well as their accurate recording for their explanation, understanding and improvement.

Conversation - is a social inquiry-specific investigation tool that supported this research through the information we will get about children and teachers included in batches. Through the guided conversations conducted with the teachers, we will find out the names of the subjects, their age, and their family situation.

6. Findings

Teachers should focus first and foremost on what children really want to be or do, not on what society rewards or on what is socially desirable; then the distinction between the (justified) reward received for the work done and the rewards of the arsenal of social control should be distinguished, as the punishment (justified) with the unacceptable restriction of some rights and freedoms must not be confused.

6.1. Qualitative research results

Regarding the investigation carried out at the students' level, it aimed at revealing the following defining aspects:

- The lack of motivation at the students in the context of the use of rewards;
- The students opinion about teachers correctness in grading their efforts.

Regarding the communication contents targeted by the study conducted at the teachers level they can be grouped into the following reference points:

- The opinion on the role of grades and rewards in mirroring the quality of the school outcomes;
- Identifying issues related to the use of rewards by teachers in student assessment.

6.2. Quantitative research results

In quantitative research it was demonstrated by analyzing the results of the questionnaires applied to the students that four of the five objectives proposed following the centralization of the questionnaire were achieved.

After centralizing students responses, we found that the most appreciated quality of a teacher is the way they communicate. At the opposite end, there is the demanding teacher and the one that give them the freedom to do what they want at school.

Most of the surveyed students, 63% said they were always praised by teachers when they asked for help, 29% said they often did, and 8% felt they were only occasionally praised and 2 % said they were never rewarded.

46% of the students consider that their views and suggestions are important for their teachers, and 35% say that their suggestions are often important. 20% of respondents think that teachers have rarely consider their views, and 5% say that teachers are keeping in mind their suggestions.

40% of respondents said the teacher always uses various rewards, and 37% think they often use such motivation methods.

20% say the teacher rarely uses various extrinsic rewards in day-to-day activities, and for 3% of students, teachers do not need rewards to make them more interested in school.

Most of the respondents, 63 percent, said the teacher always encouraged them to succeed in assessments by promising them various rewards, and 37 percent said they were often stimulated.

Most of the respondents, 74 per cent, said that the teacher's reward criteria are always unfair, and 23 per cent think that rewarding methods are often unfair.

On the opposite side, only 3% of those questioned say that they rarely happen to be wronged and no student has said that these criteria are not unfair.

77% of the students think they are rewarded all the time, and 18% say that their teacher offers rewards often, while 4% say that teacher rarely turn to rewards, and a very small percentage of 1% are not using rewards.

After centralizing the teachers answers we found that 35% of surveyed teachers say they use candy as rewarding method, 25% appeal to small items (eg. crunching, pencils, stickers, etc.), 20% use praise and only 15% privileges. 5% are calling for other means of reward.

33% of the surveyed teachers consider candy to be effective, and 27% say that small items (pencils, stickers, erasers, etc.) are the most effective. 18% consider effective privileges to be granted and 12% use praise. Only 10% of those surveyed consider effective diplomas in motivating students.

64% of those questioned said they are always using rewards in the classroom, and 34% think they often used them.

2% say that they rarely use various methods of extrinsic motivation, and no professor has said he does not use rewards.

After centralizing teacher responses, it was found that 46% of them use rewards to motivate students to learn for tests, and 38% to reduce negative behaviors. Also, 16% of those surveyed use them to increase school performance.

Most of the respondents, 60% of respondents say children should be rewarded for school performance, 30% think rewards spend too much time and only 10% that rewards are more effective if they can be retired.

7. Conclusion

The results indicate that all teachers use some kind of rewards in the classroom. Most teachers believe that rewards improve their students motivation and help increase active participation and school success. But there are some teachers that do not believe that intrinsic motivation increase as rewards are given, but they think that the pupils need feedback, meaning they need information about their achievements in the educational space, and rewards are conditional and do not respond to these needs.

Secondly, these are assessments and tend to create dependencies on the person making the assessments, namely the teacher.

In the classroom, some of the key messages communicated by teachers, especially those who reward is that old slogan: "I want to see what you can do, not your neighbour". This tendency towards individualism persists, despite the evidence that when pupils study together in carefully structured groups, the quality of their learning process is usually much higher than it could even get the smartest of them.

Whenever pupils make efforts to obtain rewards, a stream of envy and disunity is created.

Therefore, the reward system does not help to form and maintain motivation that promotes learning or optimal performance in assessments, but is used when teachers want to get the type of behaviour they want at the time.

Acknowledgments

It is true that very small ones can sometimes need control, but before we take control, we should be absolutely sure that invasive interventions do not really work. We should also think about how a control act is being exercised, provide a reasonable explanation.

Using rewards has two negative effects which are open for discussion: first, students remain controllable by those who hold power; second, they do not do what they would like to do because they are rewarded for what they are expected to do.

Teachers should focus first and foremost on children needs, not on what society rewards; then the distinction between the (justified) reward received for the work done and the rewards of the arsenal of social control should not be confused.

The mistake, considered by Iucu R., should be considered a "natural phenomenon of learning, education" (Iucu, R., 2006, p. 233) and not an inability to understand and respect normality. No mistakes must be avoided, but they must be used and converted by tact in profitable education tools.

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