A new decade for social changes
A pilot test on how motivation can influence performance in the field of European project writing

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Abstract. This pilot study analyzes how participants' motivation in a training intervention for public sports organizations influences their performance in European project writing. Our specific assumption is that performance in attracting projects with non-reimbursable funds is higher for people with a higher motivation level. The approach used in this pilot research was the individualization of success cases – organizations that either made project drafts following the European project writing training or submitted and won projects through the Erasmus+ program. The collection of quantitative data was performed using motivation tests (Achievement Motivation Inventory - AMI) that helped us to understand better the evaluated person in terms of their performance orientation and the way their motivation is articulated. There were about 40 participants involved in the training at the beginning, with only about 30 active participants throughout the training period. Eight of the 14 participants who completed the AMI test made project drafts. From the analyzed data, it emerges that people with a developed or strong average motivational index made project drafts or submitted applications within the Erasmus+ program. In contrast, the persons with a lower motivational index did not make a project draft nor submit applications to the Erasmus program. However, due to the small number of AMI tests completed, we cannot generalize this to all course participants. Further research should be done on other factors determining performance in writing European projects.

Keywords. Motivation, performance, European funds
1. Introduction

This pilot study aims to analyze the extent to which motivation or personality traits of participants in a training intervention for public sports organizations influence performance in the field of European project writing.

Motivation is the internal factor that causes a person to exhibit a specific behavior. Thus, motivation is an individual aspect. Different people are motivated by various motivational factors.

Michele Peller - University Professor of General Didactics at the Pontificia Salesiana University, talks about this critical aspect of the learning process: inside the subject, there are not only knowledge but also other elements that make up the complex system of the self - which interact with each other and give rise to what Michele Peller calls competence. The internal system of the participants influences the activation and maintenance of the learning process. Even if there is an opportunity to activate the learning process, if the participant is not motivated to learn and does not feel safe, the learning process cannot occur. In this sense, Peller (1994) shows that it is not enough that the student possesses fundamental ideas and skills that must act as a pivot for making the connection between the new knowledge to be acquired and the already existing cognitive structure, and not even that he has reached a stage of development of his intellectual capacity appropriate to the new task. He also needs to activate the cognitive and metacognitive processes necessary for the meaningful and stable acquisition of the proposed knowledge and not just do it mechanically and repetitively. Otherwise, he may refuse to engage in this constructive initiative. And here comes the problem of motivation (Peller, 1994).

From the perspective of Frederick Herzberg (1966), the factors that can influence the level of motivation of an employee fall into two categories:

- So-called "hygiene" factors - are those whose absence generates negative feelings. Usually, if everything works normally, their effect on motivation is neutral, but motivation drops sharply if they are impaired. Examples: Policy of the institution/organization; Administrative processes; Working conditions; The wage; Working relations; Personal life; The statute; Security.

- Motivational factors – make people feel good. They cause an obvious positive reaction and increase employee motivation when they occur. Examples: Positive results; Recognition; An exciting job in itself; Responsibility; Role in decision-making; Promotion; Development (A Guide on methods and tools for motivating public administration staff, General Secretariat of the Government, POCA Project).

Regarding the impact of financial rewards on motivation and performance, researchers such as Deci and Ryan (2001) have reached the following conclusions:

- Financial rewards positively affect performance when associated with tasks involving physical, monotonous, non-creative work.
- Financial rewards do not positively affect performance when they are associated with creative, intellectual work - in this case, intrinsic (internal) motivation has the most substantial effect.
- In his work "Drive" Daniel Pink (2011) identifies three main factors of motivation: Autonomy: people want to manage themselves, to have freedom of action. Skill: people want to become better and better at what they do. Purpose: People want to contribute to a purpose more significant than the immediate and individual.
According to Frederick Taylor (1998), in his scientific management theories, employee motivation can increase productivity.

Likewise, employee development through the creation of networking networks can lead to competencies such as personal effectiveness, interpersonal effectiveness, innovation, and change promotion (Teodorescu, 2022). This method can increase the participation motivation of an organization's employees.

The didactic objectives of our training intervention were the following:

- Increasing the professional skills in the field of Euro design (writing a project to submit it to a funder – in our case through the Erasmus+ program) of the approximately 40 representatives of the Central (Ministry of Youth and Sports) and County administration (County Departments of Sports and Youth) during a two months course.
- Increasing the number of Erasmus+ drafts/projects written/submitted by the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the County Departments of Sports and Youth representatives at the end of the course and six months after leaving the program.
- Increasing efficiency and effectiveness at the organizational level of the training course participants (institutional change – an organization working on projects).

The formative process that we will present in this research respects the primary stages of the life cycle of a project, according to the existing design models in the specialized literature. The ADDIE model involves the following design stages:

- Analysis (definition of training needs, establishment of the training problem, establishment of training objectives, analysis of the learning environment and entry-level of the participants in the program).
- Design – the structuring phase of the didactic course in which the objectives are identified, the didactic strategy is defined, the planning of the lessons, the selection of resources, the choice of the teaching method, and the definition of the evaluation methods.
- Development – the phase in which the process is filled with training content, didactic materials, etc.
- Implementation – in which the training devices are correlated with the natural context, the development of didactic strategies for better learning, to support the participants to transfer knowledge to the workplace.

2. Research methodology

According to Parlett and Hamilton's (1972) model, called the "illuminative" model, the same project can take a different form in each situation in which it is implemented due to cultural, social, institutional, and psychological variables. Thus, the dimensions, purpose, and evaluation techniques depend on many factors: the concerns of those who initiated them, the number of institutions involved, the number of participants, the level of collaboration and access to relevant information, the experience of the teacher, the time available for collecting the data (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972). From this perspective, data is collected from 4 areas: observation, interviews, questionnaires and tests, and relevant documents. Attitudinal, personality, and profile tests can also be used from their perspective. In our case, we used the AMI test (Achievement Motivation Inventory).
This study aims to test the general hypothesis that the performance in European design and implementation of European projects depends on an internal factor – motivation. Our specific assumption is that performance in attracting projects with non-reimbursable funds is higher for people with a higher motivation level.

The approach used in this pilot research was the individualization of success cases (success case method - SCM) – organizations that either made project drafts following the European writing training or submitted and won projects through the Erasmus+ program (Brinkerhoff, 2003). It is an evaluation method that Stake (2003) ranks among positive thinking approaches because it highlights successful cases.

This method is based on the following research stages:
1. choosing and planning a successful case study
2. creating an impact model that defines what success looks like
3. designing and surveying to find the best and worst cases
4. conducting an interview and documenting successful cases
5. communication of results, conclusions, and recommendations (Brinkerhoff, 2003).

The collection of quantitative data was performed using motivation tests for success. The AMI test (Achievement Motivation Inventory) helps to understand better the evaluated person in terms of his performance orientation and how his motivation is articulated. The Achievement Motivation Inventory (AMI) is a structured, nonverbal, omnibus measure of personality traits and behavioral preferences constructed to measure the articulation of motivation, precisely motivation for performance. The questionnaire comprises 170 items, grouped into 17 structural scales and a global motivational index.

The independent variables used are subjective factors influencing the writing and implementation of projects. The general motivational index is a simple, unweighted arithmetic sum of the 17 structural scales of AMI. The overall motivational score, i.e., the total value of the AMI, can be interpreted as the overall measure of motivation for performance in the profession. This score shows the degree to which the evaluated person is generally motivated to succeed in the profession. The 17 scales are:
1. compensatory effort: the desire to make extra effort to avoid failure.
2. competitiveness - the tendency to drive to win and be better and faster than others.
3. confidence in success - the belief in the ability to achieve even challenging goals that stem from a belief in one’s own knowledge and skills.
4. dominance - the tendency to exercise power over others, to take the initiative, and to control one’s activities.
5. desire to learn - thirst for knowledge and the effort to learn new things, even without an external reward.
6. level of involvement - the ability to maintain a high activity level, usually related to work, for long periods with little rest.
7. level of courage - the absence of fear of failing complex tasks.
8. level of flexibility - willingness to accept change and enjoy new challenging tasks.
9. level of perseverance - the ability to maintain long periods of concentration without being distracted; the probability of being lost in the outside world and absorbed by a task.
10. the level of goal setting - the tendency to set goals and make long-term plans to achieve them.
11. level of independence - the preference for making decisions and working at one’s own pace and the tendency to take responsibility for one’s actions.
12. level of internality - attributing one's success to one’s actions and efforts rather than situational variables or luck.
13. level of persistence – tenacity and energy given to the task.
14. level of preference for complex tasks - the tendency to look for challenging tasks rather than light ones and the desire to look for more significant challenges once the previous ones have been fulfilled.
15. level of preference for performance pride - pleasure and satisfaction derived from achievement, doing everything possible, and improving performance.
16. level of self-control - the ability to delay satisfaction and to organize themselves and their work.
17. level of status orientation - the desire to achieve a high status in personal life and to progress professionally.

The dependent variables used are the number of Erasmus+ application drafts and the number of Erasmus+ projects submitted.

There were about 40 participants involved in the training at the beginning, with only about 30 active participants throughout the training period. Of the 40 participants, only 30 completed the training program, and out of the 14 participants that completed the AMI test, 8 made project drafts. Only one organization submitted and won an Erasmus+ Sport project as project leader, and 4 other organizations presented projects as partners.

The central aim of this pilot research initiative was to develop a workshop for the management team of the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MTS) and the County Departments of Sports and Youth (DJST) and to assess whether or not the practical skills learned in the workshop are transferred to daily activities at work and how motivation influences this process. The organizations involved consist of a board of directors/executives with 41 people in charge with about 30 employees each.

The process began with a 2-hour meeting with all participants. The purpose of this meeting was to explain the technical aspects of online training, get to know the participants better, set expectations, define training methods during training, and analyze the answers to the online questionnaire to collect each participant’s expectations. Most participants had their main expectation to work on practical applications/calls and deepen their knowledge in writing and implementing projects. At the same time, we stated that individual participation is voluntary. The training was conducted with the Ministry of Youth and Sports's total commitment to the research context. All participants signed GDPR agreements. The information session was followed by weekly training sessions lasting approximately 3 hours each for two months.

Various assessments were carried out during the training, including Achievement Motivation Inventory tests. The AMI test was sent to all the participants in the training program. Still, only a part completed this test – 14 in total, of which six were high-performing people from the County Sports and Youth Directorates (who created project drafts/submitted projects within the Erasmus+ Sports program) and two from the Ministry of Youth and Sports. This low-test completion rate was due to a large number of items on the test (170) and the estimated completion time of approximately 40-50 minutes, depending on the individual.

3. Results and discussions

From the analyzed data, it emerges that people with a developed/higher or intense average motivational index made project drafts/submitted applications within the Erasmus+ program. In contrast, the persons with a lower motivational index did not make a project draft
or apply to the Erasmus program. However, due to the small number of AMI tests completed, we cannot generalize this to all course participants.

**Table 1.** Analysis of the link between the realization of project drafts and the Motivational index of MTS and DJST representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Realization of a draft project</th>
<th>Submitted projects as Project Leader</th>
<th>General Motivational Index at the AMI test</th>
<th>AMI Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>MTS</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>718</td>
<td>Lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>MTS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>849</td>
<td>Upper medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Mureș</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>Lower-medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>Medium-developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Constanța</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>792</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Giurgiu</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>Lower-medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Vrancea</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>819</td>
<td>Medium-developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Vrancea</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Medium-high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>MTS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Prahova</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>835</td>
<td>Medium to high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Timișoara</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Hunedoara</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>893</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Hunedoara</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Brașov</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>922</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Figures 1 and 2 below, suggestive images were shown for the two high performers from the training course who submitted an Erasmus+ Sport application and obtained funding for the proposed project.
Figure 1. AMI profile of a performant representative of DJST

Figure 2. AMI profile of a performant representative of DJST

People with high scores on the general motivational index are determined and motivated. Often, they stand out through perseverance, personal willingness to submit effort,
work power, and a generalized conviction that one’s action and skills are generative of results and not luck or chance.

Sometimes these people are highly confident in their strengths and success and feel pride in their achievements, which motivates them to work and directs them towards challenging tasks. Other times, they fear defeat and failure, which also motivates them. Some people want to access a certain status, others want appreciation, and others are oriented towards competition. All these traits are facets of the motivation that articulates the specific behavior of these people.

The way these facets are structured in the person evaluated must be determined by considering the structural scales. An individual with a high score on the general motivation scale is described as motivated, hardworking, focused, persistent, self-confident, demanding, fighter, determined, involved, and diligent.

4. Conclusion

This preliminary study aimed to analyze the extent to which motivation or personality traits of participants in a training intervention for public sports organizations influence performance in European project writing.

In this sense, of the 42 participants who entered the training program, 30 completed the training program, and out of the 14 participants that completed the AMI test, 8 made project drafts. Only one organization submitted and won an Erasmus+ Sport project as project leader, and four other organizations submitted projects as partners.

From the analysis of the quantitative data, it emerged that the general hypothesis is confirmed, namely that the performance in writing and implementing European projects depends on the level of motivation - responsibility, role in decision-making, satisfaction, and recognition. Thus, the performance in attracting projects with non-reimbursable funds is higher in people with a higher motivation level, especially the desire to learn.

Although on a declarative level, the participants specified a positive impact of the training on their performance and the institution they belong to, on a practical level, the number of submitted projects remains low. Further research should be done on the organizational factors determining performance in writing European projects.

References


