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Study of motivation in Portuguese students

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Introduction

Since young people spend most of their time in school in order to acquire the skills necessary for their personal fulfillment and school life project, relating motivation to educational contexts is necessary because of the importance they have. Motivation is one of the most predictive factors of school success, and it is increasingly necessary for schools to focus on the implementation of personal and social skills development programs (Galinha, 2006; Jardim, 2007; Lopes, Galinha & Loureiro, 2010). Academic success according to PISA's international statistical data indicate that they must be established in a way which, in addition to essential knowledge, also translates into a better competence for the 21st century. (OECD, 2013; 2015).

1. Motivation and Behavior

Etymologically the concept of Motivation derives from the Latin movere (with movement). Set of physiological and psychological processes in their action responsible for the process of triggering, for the maintenance and cessation of a behavior. The concept of motivation tends to include an element of stimulation - the energetic forces responsible for behavior, an element of action and effort, the observed behavior, an element of movement and persistence, and an element of reward. Motivation can be intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to behaviors that are stimulated by self. Extrinsic motivation has the external motivating factor. Tendentially the intrinsic motivation is the one that, of the two, tends to maintain itself along the time. Motivation studies the set of factors that control the triggering of behavior covered by hypothetical elements such as instinct, tendency, and appetite. The study of stimuli and responses aims to determine the characteristics of the stimulus that can trigger a response. By motivation needs become goals. The development of motivation implies the learning of the channeling of the needs, the cognitive elaboration of the objectives, the instrumental motivation of means and ends and functional autonomy (Maslow, 1983; Vala & Monteiro, 2000; Galinha, 2006; Pina e Cunha; Rego, Campos e Cunha, & Cabral-Cardoso, 2007) .

2. Problem Statement

In adolescence, motivation is a predictive factor in academic success. Motivated students have higher levels of satisfaction in school, mobilizing interests and skills in six domains present in the QME questionnaire. The domains measured in the QME questionnaire are: strategies (F1), extrinsic objectives of the teacher (F2), extrinsic objectives of the student with external regulation (F3), intrinsic objectives of the teacher (F4), extrinsic objectives of the student with internal regulation (F5) and intrinsic objectives of the student (F6).

3. Research Questions

- Students submitted to the P-DMAR Program have higher motivation levels relative to the control group in the six domains present in the QME questionnaire?
- Are there statistically significant differences in motivation values after the P-DMAR program, relative to gender, in each of the six domains present in the QME questionnaire?

4. Purpose of the Study

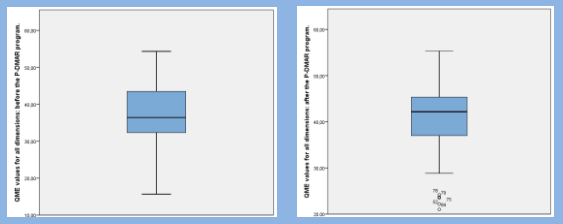
This study aims to assess the existence of improvements in motivational dynamicsin Portuguese adolescents. The School Motivation Questionnaire - QME (Cordeiro, 2010) was administered to two groups (experimental vs control) at two different moments, before and after participation in the P-DMAR (Fonseca, Galinha & Loureiro, 2017).

Methods

A sample of 86 students (n = 43 experimental group, n = 43 control group) was considered. A descriptive analysis of the QME values was performed before and after the P-DMAR program, based on the main statistical measures of location and dispersion. The statistical methodology consisted of a quantitative analysis of the QME using hypothesis tests for independent and paired samples. An $\alpha = 5\%$ was set. The statistical analysis was performed in R software, R Core Team (2016).

Results

Males were predominant (51.2%) and 29.1% of respondents were repeating. Before applying the P-DMAR program to the 86 students (44 males and 42 females) the overall results considering the six dimensions (F1 to F6) were: the mean value of school motivation in the six dimensions under analysis was 37.45 (sd 8.48). If the sex were considered, the overall mean value of the QME in the males was 37.93 (sd 9.88), being higher than the overall mean value in the opposite sex, 36.94 (sd 6, 81).



(a) (b)

Figure 1: Illustration of the distribution of QME values, referring to 86 students, before (a) and after (b) the P-DMAR program.

After submitted the students to the P-DMAR program the overall results considering the six dimensions (F1 to F6) were: the mean value of the school motivation in the six dimensions under analysis after the program was 40.92 (sd 7.22), a value higher than that obtained before the program.
If the sex were considered, the overall mean value of QME after the program in males was 40.67 (sd 7.59), being lower than the overall mean value in the opposite sex, 41.19 (sd 6.89). The t-Paired Test identified statistically significant differences between the QME values before and after the P-DMAR program (p-value 0.00549) for an α=5%. Although QME values in all dimensions after the P-DMAR program increased in the study sample, no statistically significant differences were recorded for gender in the domains under review.

Conclusions

It was verified that the P-DMAR is a valuable instrument with statistical significance ($p < 0.01$) because the students participating in it saw their motivational capacities enhanced in the following six domains measured in the QME: strategies, extrinsic objectives of the teacher, extrinsic objectives of the student with external regulation, intrinsic objectives of the teacher, extrinsic objectives of the student with internal regulation and intrinsic objectives of the student. There weren't statistically significant differences in motivation values after the P-DMAR program, relative to gender, in each of the six domains present in the QME questionnaire.

References

R Core Team (2016). R: A language and environment for statistical computing. R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria. URL https://www.R-project.org/.