**Analysis of the Motivation Theories in Management Discipline: Learning, Motivation and Self-Determination Theory**

**ABSTRACT**

The paper describes, compares and analyzes the most commonly used motivation theories in management and psychology sciences. It is a theoretical research about learning and motivation. Its main topic is learning, motivation and self-determination theory with focus on human motivation. In the first chapter there is a comparison of motivation theories including cognitive motivation, learning and human specific motivation. “Self-determination theory is a macro theory of human motivation that evolved from research on work organizations and other dominants of life.” (Deci, Olafsen, Ryan, 2017: 19) The relevancy of self-determination from the point of research is that it can be used to analyze the motivation of an individual, both in terms of learning or any other activities. Self-determination theory is based on the analysis of external and internal factors affecting the individual person.

**Keywords:**

motivation; learning; Self-Determination Theory

**COMPARISON OF MOTIVATION THEORIES, COGNITIVE MOTIVATION AND LEARNING**

Motivation theories can be classified in several ways in psychology and also in management sciences. This chapter shows those psychological theories and their classification which are connected to motivation theories in business. Literature review is used as a method to show the mainstream’s opinion of the topic.

Motivation cannot be observed directly. What we can observe is the multidimensional process of behavior and the result of it. According to the behavioral process analysis, the motivation process is influenced by the environment, personality, conviction, ability and skills of an individual. (Kanfer, 1990)

Motivational theories can be classified in management sciences by content[[1]](#footnote-1), or process[[2]](#footnote-2). The textbooks of organizational behavior Buchanan and Huczynski (2001), Knights and Willmott (2007), Bakacsi (2007), Thompson (2007), Robbins and Judge (2013) and Kispál-Vitai (2013) also use this classification (shown in the footnote).

Kanfer (1990) divides into three groups the motivational theories he describes:

Researches analyzing the need-motive-value research relation. These focus on the typical and determinative behavior of the individual, such as the theories concerning the needs of the individual, internal motivation, equity and justice theory.

Cognitive choice research theories such as the as the impact of the individual’s expectations on behavior (expectancy-theory of motivation; VIE, valence=value, instrumentality = performance, outcome; expectancy = effort), attribution theory, dynamics of action theory;

Self-regulation-metacognition approaches target cognition-behavior, such as the goal-setting theory, social learning and the cybernetic control theories. The later one focuses on the motivation patterns highlighting the targeted behavior. Defining motivation concentrates on the self-governing cognitive behavior, which specifies the effect of motivation force on the performance and behavior.

When classifying the motivational theories it is important to highlight that the results of the 1930-40s were based on drive theories. Later, in the 1950-60s drive theories became outdated and researchers’ attention turned to cognitive structures, learning and their effects on performance. This is confirmed by the researches of Campbell and Pritchard (1976), Cofer and Appley (1964) and Weiner (1980). In contrast of drive-reduction and reinforcement theory, experimental psychology recommends explaining individual aspirations, expectations and their effect on behavior.

With the development of cognitive perspective motivation was identified as the key factor among the alternatives. Cognitive perspective was later elaborated in the performance motivational theories, for example the theories by Atkinson (1957), McClelland (1961) and Ryan (1970). Later, it became the base of several well-known theories in the 1960s such as the theories of Adams (1965), Atkinson (1964), Locke (1968) and Vroom (1964). Among these motivational theories several definitions are known in the management sciences.

Among the motivational theories known in psychology, Oláh (2006) mentions four primary groups:

* primary homeostatic motivation systems (these help the survival of a person such as air intake, body temperature regulation, fluid intake control, food intake control and control of defending or offensive behavior);
* primary non-homeostatic motivation systems (such as sexuality, motivation for interpersonal connections, motivation of prosocial behavior);
* cognitive motivation (ingestion, curiosity, manipulation, thirst for knowledge);
* human-specific motivation.

Among these, the current chapter primarily focuses on cognitive and human-specific motivation, because these type of motivations are close to the motivational theories examined in management science, and these theories can also explain the motivation of individuals to learn.

Motivation in Oláh (2006) primarily explains our actions, which are closely related to past events. Another approach makes motivation dependent on future results, which places the emphasis on what can be considered as the cause and what can be the possible effects of the current actions in the future. In this meaning, motivation is the sum of all external and internal factors affecting the activity of the individual. (Oláh, 2006) Several theories can be used to examine the learning processes of an individual next to the motivation of him or her. Among others, such theory is the reinforcement theory by Skinner (1954).

Learning has an important role in the behavior of an individual, which is explained by the reinforcement theory of Skinner (1954), which is widely used in business science to examine the motivation of an individual. However, the knowledge of the theory of Skinner (1954) primarily helps to study behavioral patterns as the theory ignores the individual’s cognitive processes and focuses only on the outcome of the behavior. According to Skinner (1954), behavior will be determined by output, i.e. what the individual will receive in return, so there is no need to study cognitive processes. Another assumption is that the behavior of a person can be modeled with animal experiments, by which Skinner justified his statements. (Kispál-Vitai, 2013)

Another theory dealing with learning is by Bandura (1997): the theory of social learning that was later developed to the so-called social cognitive theory (abbreviated: SCT) (Luthans & Stajkovic, 2002). By Bandura (1997) the social cognitive theory is added up from the following things: symbols, foresight, learning from others and other’s emotions (vicarious learning), self-regulation and self-reflection. The self-regulation and self-reflection are closely connected to each other. Self-efficacy is equal to the individual’s self-confidence, belief in himself or herself and his or her own abilities furthermore the motivation to be able to use his or her cognitive resources in acting to solve a specific task in the given environment. (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy contributes significantly to work motivation. Cognitive-social learning theories give huge importance to the cognitive internal processes and to social learning. In this way individual learning is dependent on confirmation by the society and emotions and experiences of others, and of course whether the individual has external or internal control. (Luthans & Stajkovic, 2002) In the theory of Bandura (1997) there is great significance of observational learning, the cognitive schemes of the individual and the trio of the environment – personality – behavior, because these three factors can cause the so-called reciprocal determinism.

The actions of the individuals can be explained by other learning theories, in this way motivation theories can be interpreted by the information-theory approach of learning. According to Festinger (1957), the actions or motivations of the individuals can be explained by cognitive dissonance. If the action and the beliefs are the same, there is no urge to do anything, if these are not in line to each other the individual is urged to resolve the internal conflict. The theory of Heider (1958) is also a cognitive theory. This is a kind of reasoning when the successes or failures of individuals are attributed to internal or external factors. The factors, i.e. causes, in other words the control of attribution can be internal or external: if the person has success, this is usually attributed to his or her knowledge or skills, in case there is a failure, this is rather attributed to external factors, such as misfortune, hardness of the task, lack of time. (Kispál-Vitai, 2013) According to Oláh (2006), the attribution of the reason to make an effort can be the most important.

Cognitive motivation: Cognitive motivation involves the environmental information collecting and processing behavior of the individual. (Oláh, 2006) One base of this can be the sensory input from the environment. It can be considered important that the individual should have enough patterned and understandable sensory input from the environment while doing his or her work otherwise he will be bored and feel the work monotonous. (Oláh, 2006) The focus of cognitive motivation is on three factors which are the following:

The emphasis of the theory in on individual competency, autonomy and connection needs. These three factors are in parallel with the existence, relatedness and growth theory in management science which is based on the theory of Alderfer (1969).

According to the research of Maslow (1968), individuals have a certain biological need for knowledge, which is a kind of instinctual desire for understanding. This is at a different level of different individuals, satisfying the results in a subjective satisfaction. The feeling of satisfaction and the sense of personal reward is an important factor in cognitive motivation. This type of motivation is intrinsic in nature, i.e. internal motivation, which is discussed by several theories in management science. “Cognitive motivation can therefore be considered as a primary, biologically determined pattern to maintain the homeostatic balance of the central nervous system”. (Oláh, 2006: 349) If there is no balance, the activity of the individual nervous system is not optimal and the behavior can be abnormal. If this persists it can cause health problems. Preventing this by satisfying the cognitive needs of individuals is important. (Oláh, 2006) According to Grastyán (1974), the complexity of change, new tasks and their complexity causes inhibition in the individual, but on the other side it also has a motivating effect, a positive experience for the individual which confirms the behavior. Among other things, the driving force of a children to play is the desire to experience and learn, which can have an important role in later life because it can be a base of human creativity. (Oláh, 2006)

Human-specific motivation: Human and animal learning needs are, to a certain extent, biologically comparable, however human behavior involves not only adaptation to the environment, but also creativity and search for new opportunities, which are commonly referred to as human-specific patterns. These go beyond the biological needs of the individual and lead to positive satisfaction, improve self-evaluation, self-respect, and explain the need of knowledge and experience of the individual. (Oláh, 2006) This competence pattern can also be experienced in the animal world as a kind of curiosity and aspiration to use the environmental resources and social relationships more efficiently. (Oláh, 2006)

The autonomy pattern is the person’s aspiration to be able to decide and to choose from the opportunities emerging from his or her environment and be able to control his or her actions. (Reeve, 2005) The need for autonomy basically determines whether the behavior of an individual is controlled externally or internally. If we read a book because we are preparing for an exam, our behavior is based on external expectation, but if we read because of interest, it means a kind of internal control. The aspiration of an individual’s autonomy may differ according to what he or she has experienced through social learning and it is also influenced by cultural differences. (Oláh, 2006)

Continuing the examination, it is worth to study needs and patterns for individual performance as this is the most studied factor in both psychology and management science.

Regarding to this Murray (1938) draws attention to the fact that people differ from each other in their willingness to solve new, difficult tasks, exercise power, and how quickly they are willing to perform each task. So we actually get to the motivation theory of McClelland (1961, 1987) dealing with performance motivation. The researcher has examined performance motivation with the Thematic Appearance Test, namely TAT cards. According to the theory, there can be three types of motivation in a person: need of achievement, need of affiliation and need of power. (Kispál-Vitai, 2013)

The theory of McClelland (1961) was further developed by Atkinson (1988), where two factors affect the performance of the individual: one of them is the possibility for success, the other is the fear of being unsuccessful. The fear of lacking success can be described by three components. By the theory we can speak about success-oriented and failure avoiding people who react differently to the difficulty of a freely chosen goal. Success-oriented people can be successful in average difficulty tasks, failure avoiding people rather prefer very easy or very hard tasks. In their case this means that in an easy task it is easy to achieve success, in case of a very hard tasks they can explain a possible failure by the difficulty of the task. (Oláh, 2006)

In order for an individual to achieve performance competency is important, the achieved performance is confirmatory and has a motivating effect on doing further tasks.

The more success the individual has, the more motivated he or she will be to achieve better performance, the more failure, the less motivated for further performance. Important factor to reach success is attribution, i.e. the reason, when an individual attributes failure to internal cause. Making himself or herself responsible for the failure will decrease possibility of repeated attempts. If failure is attributed to external reasons the individual will be more persistent and will try again. (Oláh, 2006)

The possibility of self-actualization is also part of the human-specific approach of motivation. Regarding the self-actualization, in the beginning Maslow (1954) thought that there were higher and lower needs, and as long as lower needs were not satisfied, the individual was not able to achieve higher level self-actualization. However, later he developed this idea (Maslow, 1970) that a human being already has a motivational development at birth that is so strong in many people that it suppresses motivation for basic needs. Several examples show that such creative people were able to self-actualization who did not even have the most basic hygienic factors coming from a poor family, such as Rembrandt and Van Gough.

A contemporary research (Tay & Diener, 2011) tested the Maslow theory with empirical studies. The questionnaire survey was completed by 60 865 participants between 2005 to 2010 in a total of 123 countries. Respondents draw up six basic needs that were very close to the elements of the Maslow (1962) pyramid. The research of Tay and Diener (2011) confirms that there are human needs independent of culture, but the research does not state that the order of these needs are the same for all cultures, so the order of the elements of the pyramid of Maslow (1962) may vary from culture to culture.

Another important need is the transcendence need, which examines the reason and meaning of existence. A further need is the need for affiliation, which is aimed at intimacy and social relationships.

The classification of human patterns can be done in a variety of ways. On the one hand, we can examine the effects of external and internal factors on the individual, which have a controlling effect. (Deci & Ryan, 2000) According to them the status of the motivation of an individual can be defined in three ways: external motivation, internal motivation, and lack of motivation (Ryan, 1995). This theory will be discussed in more details in the next chapter. Individuals may have a need for autonomy, competence, and social relationships. Deci and Ryan (2000) and Reeve (2005) classifies individual motivation patterns according to their life, social and psychological needs.

In addition, we can examine motivation by the four groups mentioned at the beginning of this chapter: primary homeostatic motivation systems, primary non-homeostatic motivation systems, cognitive motivation, human-specific motivation. Among these, management science focuses more on the content and process differentiation of motivational theories and the cognitive and human-specific motivation.

### Edward L. Deci – Richard M. Ryan (1985): Self-Determination Theory

People can usually be motivated by two factors in their work or other activities: external factors, and internal factors. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), people perform tasks because of such external factors like rewards, good marks, good evaluations and the opinions of other peoples. Internal factors are factors that are not necessarily rewarded or supported externally but at the same time they are able to sustain the interest and creativity of the individual in his or her long-term effort to reach the goal. The self-determination theory is a human-specific macro theory with its examination focused on the interaction of external and internal motivational factors. This model makes it possible to analyze the work, learning process, sports and other activities. (Deci et. al., 2017) This area examines the effect of motivational factors on personality. The framework of the theory is given by the external and internal motivational factors, the effects of individual and social development, furthermore the personal differences. Individuals are influenced by social and cultural factors that are either facilitate or obstruct the will and initiation willingness of the individual next to influence the quality of life and performance. (Deci & Ryan, 1985). According to the theory, every human has three basic needs born with him or her, which are the following: autonomy, competence, social relationships.

The individual tries to make balance between these three basic needs. The self-determination theory is a theory which assumes that the individual is an organic entity that is capable of evolving, creative, interested in new challenges and collects experiences that he or she uses to create a coherent self-image. The development of the theory itself means that we are no longer solely distinguishing external or internal motivational factors, but we are talking about individuals who are making tasks by external control or internal will. The self-determination theory includes six smaller theoretical frameworks (Deci & Ryan, 2000a):

Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET):the theory deals with the internal motivation that has an effect on the behavior that makes us happy. Such a feeling can be when we play or discover the world in childhood. This source of motivation is with us throughout our lives. The cognitive evaluation theory focuses on social behavior, rewarding, control between individuals, and the influence of ego on internal motivation. Abilities, competences and support play an important role in developing motivation, which is an important part of our performance in learning, in sport, and in other activities.

Organismic Integration Theory (OIT)(Deci & Ryan, 2000b)**:** the theory deals with the characteristics and consequences of various external motivational tools. The purpose of external motivational tools is to change the individual’s behavior to the desired direction by rewarding. It is part of the external motivational continuum: external regulation, introjection, identification, integration. (Figure 1)

The upper continuum starts from external drivers to reach internal motivation. It is important for an individual to move from outer factors to internal autonomy, making his or her behavior more and more internally controlled. The so-called OIT deals with such external social factors and contexts that enhance or inhibit internalization, which are factors that help to deepen our beliefs and convictions. From the point of view of organizational integration, two basic competencies have outstanding importance: these are affiliation and autonomy. (Deci & Ryan, 2000a)

Casuality Orientations Theory (COT):the next mini theory examines how different individuals adapt to the environment and how they change their behavior as a result. Theory formulates three types of orientation caused by this:

* autonomy orientation (we act based on our interests),
* control orientation (the focus is on the reward, profit, approval),
* impersonal or motivational orientation (anxiety based on the lack of skills which we feel when we are not able to solve a task).

Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT):This concept examines the relationship between psychological needs and mental health and well-being. The BPNT concept states that psychological well-being and optimal functioning is the base of the anatomy, competencies and social relationships of the individual. Therefore, the effects affecting the basic needs of an individual affect the well-being. If there is something missing from the three basic needs, it will affect our so-called psychological well-being in a negative direction. By the design of the concept it is important to mention that it is appropriate to make examinations of cultures because they are independent of basic needs. (Deci & Ryan, 2000a)

Goal Contents Theory (GCT): the theory has emerged from the distinction between external and internal motivational goals and the effect of these factors on motivation and well-being. The theory differentiates the goals from satisfying the basic needs which gives the so-called well-being. If external goals like financial success, appearance, popularity are in contrast with the internal goals as personal and close relationships and personal development creates a bad feeling in the individual.

Relationships Motivation Theory (RMT): the feeling of belonging to someone, which means that an individual can form a close relationship between his or her partner or friends or is part of a group can be classified as part of the three basic factors influencing the behavior of the individual. The individual fulfills his or her needs for social needs by forming relationships.

Among the three basic factors, the existence of good quality social relationships influences the feel of the competence and autonomy in the individual.

From the previously mentioned frameworks, the external or internal control of the individual, that is the organizational integration theory, can have a great influence on learning. In the initial phase of the activity social learning outlined by Bandura (1997) can be an important factor. This is to follow others activity and learning by observation. The continuum of the driving forces of external and internal motivation factors are shown in Figure 1.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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The advantage of the model is that the motivation of an individual can be observed for both work, sport and learning. Another advantage is that it can be compared with commonly used motivational theories in the management science because most of the models deal with external and internal motivation when judging the motivation of an individual. The theory also examines the presence of autonomy, competences, and social relationships in the life of an individual which is the base of most process motivation theories.

**SUMMARY**

The classification of human motives can be determined both by grouping factors in management science and the most commonly used theories in psychology. The goal of most motivation theories are to determine the cause of the motivation of an individual in work, learn, do sport or do other activities in his or her life. Such a theory is the self-determination theory. (Deci et. al., 2017). On one hand, we can examine the controlling effect of external and internal factors on the individual (Deci & Ryan, 2000b). Furthermore, the state of an individual regarding motivation can be of three different types: external motivation, internal motivation and lack of motivation. An individual may have a need for autonomy, competences, and social relationships. Deci and Ryan (2000b) and Reve (2005) classify individual patterns according to living, social and psychological needs.

In addition, we can examine motivation by the four groups mentioned in the beginning of this paper: primary homeostatic motivation systems, primary non-homeostatic motivation systems, cognitive motivation, and humane-specific motivation. (Oláh, 2006) Among these, management science focuses more on cognitive and human-specific motivation, which viewpoint is the most closely related one to learning theories.

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**FIGURE** **1**

**The Self-Determination Continuum Showing Types of Motivation with Their Regulatory Styles**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of motivation | Amotivation  (Lack of motivation) | Extrinsic Motivation | | | | | | | | | | | Intrinsic Motivation |
| Regulatory Styles | Non-Regulation | External Regulation | | Introjected Regulation | | Identified Regulation | | | Integrated Regulation | | | | Intrinsic Regulation |
| Quality of activity | Control |  | | |  | | |  | | | |  | Self-Determination |
| Perceived Locus of Causality | Impersonal | External | Somewhat external | | | | Somewhat internal | | | | Internal | | Internal |
| Relevant Regulatory Processes | Nonintentional  Nonvaluing  Incompetence  Lack of Control | Compliance  External Reward and Punishments | | Self-control  Ego-Involvement  Internal Rewards and Punishments | | | Personal Importance,  Conscious Valuing | | | Congruence Awareness,  Synthesis with Self | | | Interest Enjoyment, Inherent Satisfaction |

**(**Deci & Ryan, 2000b: 72)

1. Content theories: hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943); two-factor theory (Herzberg, 1968); existence, relatedness and growth theory (ERG Theory) (Alderfer, 1969); achievement, power, affiliation theory (McClelland, 1961). Content theories want to answer the question what motivates the individual. (Kispál-Vitai, 2013) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Process theories: reinforcement theory (Skinner, 1954); goal setting theory (Locke, 1968); expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964); equity theory (Adams, 1963); self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Content theories want to answer the question how the individual can be motivated. (Kispál-Vitai, 2013) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)