
DIMENSIONS OF MOTIVATION TO LEARN FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF STUDENTS: 20 YEARS OF RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT. This article aims to identify and analyze dimensions that can be seen as motivating or demotivating factors for the learning of History in the 2nd year of “Bachillerato” (Spanish post-compulsory secondary education stage) according to the students’ views. The information necessary to answer these questions arises from a line of research started more than two decades ago. For such a purpose, several questionnaires for information collection were handed out to 1,523 students from the Region of Murcia, and interviews were conducted with 200 students attending different undergraduate courses from Alicante, Almeria, Barcelona, Murcia and Seville. Results indicate a certain level of perseverance along school years and show a dimension linked to relational aspects which, to a great extent, contribute to boosting the students’ motivation to learn History. In this way, the atmosphere of the classroom and the teacher can be considered as motivating agents; it is worth pointing out that a teacher able to plan, organize and propose tasks that can overcome the traditional methodology and a teacher capable of creating a dynamic space by using cooperative activities in an environment of trust can promote the interest of students and make them acquire a taste for History, while raising academic quality.

Keywords: Motivation; students; teachers.

DIMENSIONES DE LA MOTIVACIÓN DESDE LA PERSPECTIVA DEL ALUMNADO: 20 AÑOS INVESTIGACIÓN

RESUMEN. Este artículo tiene como objetivo identificar y analizar qué dimensiones se constituyen como factores de motivación o desmotivación hacia el aprendizaje, en la materia de Historia de segundo curso de Bachillerato, desde el punto de vista de los estudiantes. La información para responder a estas cuestiones surge de una línea de investigación iniciada hace más de dos décadas, desde cuyo marco se han realizado diversas recogidas de datos a través de cuestionarios a 1523 estudiantes de la Región de Murcia y entrevistas a 200 estudiantes de diferentes titulaciones universitarias, repartidos por las provincias de Alicante, Almería, Barcelona, Murcia y Sevilla. Los resultados indican una constancia a lo largo de los cursos y ponen de manifiesto una dimensión ligada a aspectos relacionales que contribuyen, en gran medida, a la motivación del alumnado hacia el aprendizaje de la Historia. Así, el clima del aula y el profesor se consideran agentes de motivación, sugiriendo que un profesor capaz de planificar, organizar y proponer tareas lejos de la metodología tradicional y más próximo a crear ambientes dinámicos, a través de actividades cooperativas en un clima de confianza, puede contribuir a fomentar el interés, enganchar y despertar el gusto por la Historia, así como aumentar la calidad académica.

Palabras clave: Motivación; alumnado; profesorado.

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DIMENSÕES DA MOTIVAÇÃO NA APRENDIZAGEM A PARTIR DA PERSPECTIVA DOS ALUNOS: 20 ANOS DE PESQUISA.

RESUMO. Este artigo tem como objetivo identificar e analisar que dimensões se constituem como fatores de motivação ou desmotivação para a aprendizagem, na matéria de *História*, do ponto de vista dos estudantes do segundo ano de bacharelado. A informação para responder a estas questões surge de uma linha de investigação iniciada há mais de duas décadas; desde a então foram realizadas diversas coletas de dados por meio de questionários aplicados a 1523 estudantes da Região de Múrcia e entrevistas a 200 estudantes de diferentes cursos universitários, pertencentes às províncias de Alicante, Almería, Barcelona, Múrcia e Sevilla. Os resultados mostram uma constância ao longo dos anos e põem em evidência uma dimensão unida a aspectos relacionais que contribuem, em grande parte, à motivação do alunado para a aprendizagem da História. Assim, o clima da sala e o professor consideram-se como agentes de motivação, sugerindo que um professor capaz de planificar, organizar e propor tarefas longe da metodologia tradicional e mais próximo de criar ambientes dinâmicos, a partir de atividades cooperativas em um clima de confiança, pode contribuir para fomentar o interesse, captar e fazer acordar o gosto pela História, bem como aumentar a qualidade acadêmica.

Palavras-chave: Motivação; estudantes; professores.

Introduction

This article focuses on a dimension that is a reason for concern when the teaching of History in Post-Compulsory Secondary Education in Spain is addressed: motivation. We follow the same approach adopted by Alcántara and Bernal (2011), who argue that motivation should be assessed by subjects separately, since it is regarded as an unstable characteristic that depends on context, the student, the teacher, and is therefore variable; what matters is to understand *why* and *how*. Information to answer these questions comes from a line of research that began more than two decades ago and has always had students as its main source of information.

We agree with Pascual (2010) on that "teaching is a set of conscious and unconscious acts commonly called teaching practices in the classroom" (p.31). The teacher should help create spaces and opportunities for learning. From these reflections it is possible to draw two conclusions: first, teaching and learning are linked activities, that is, one cannot understand the former without the latter, and vice versa. In this sense, there is no doubt that it is necessary to consider teaching and learning together, since both are indissoluble (Murillo, Martínez, & Hernández, 2011); if learning is not produced, the teaching process has to be reviewed. Secondly, talking about education involves the creation of an environment, a set of intentional actions aimed at achieving motivation to learn. This intentionality is bidirectional, concerning both the teacher, who teaches, and the student, who learns. In the case of the student this motivation depends on both *internal* and *external* factors (Tapia & Fernández, 2008). From this perspective, the perceptions and beliefs that the learner has are combined with cognitive motivational processes, as school learning is regarded as a personal construction process in which the student intends to learn and therefore plays an essentially active role (Valle, González, Barca, & Núñez, 1996). Thus, it can be said that one not only should take into account personal and internal variables but also external ones, which come from the context in which the teaching-learning process takes place, influencing those who interact with it. It is at this point that it is possible to find the conception of learning environments as the surrounding dimension of the classroom, integrated and formed by different ecosystems that interact to achieve learning. In this way, we have to contemplate the family context and its relationship with the educational context, which, in turn, is integrated by the perception of students, that is, the way that they experience and feel the atmosphere of the classroom, the pro-social relationships with their peers and teachers, the control over their own learning process (self-regulation). Based on all of this it is possible to grasp that the classroom is not only a physical space composed of desks and chairs arranged in a certain way, but also a social place full of meanings and interpretations of the events that occur immediately and particularly where the teacher-student relationship requires special attention. In this ever-changing space of transactions one can see scenarios being transformed,

relationships between teachers and students, expectations and responsibilities of students in terms of performance, valuation of types of tasks, personal valuations, etc. (Bono, 2010). In this sense, contributions in the psychology field evidence that motivation to learn varies according to the learning contexts in which subjects are and highlight the cultural and contextual value of learning processes whose construction occurs in specific scenarios. For this reason, when it comes to education, the need to work on learning from the perspective of situated cognition, socio-cultural models, the relationship between cognitive and emotional factors involved has made room for the contextual study of motivation in the scenarios where it develops (Pintrich & Schunk, 2006). Therefore, motivation is not tied solely to aspects related to the material conditions necessary for the implementation of the curriculum, but goes beyond that. For this reason, one should take into account the classroom dynamics that constitutes educational processes and involves actions and experiences of both teacher and student: attitudes, material and socio-affective conditions, relationships with the environment, as well as the means necessary for the implementation of educational proposals towards an effective and quality teaching. A teacher-student relationship based on respect and affection from teachers to students and the recognition of achievements, attitudes and behaviors undoubtedly contribute to that (Murillo, et al., 2011).

On the one hand, Díaz, Alfageme and Serrano (2013) point out that student learning depends largely on the quality of teachers and their knowledge. Specifically, the teacher-student relationship and its quality affect the performance of students. On the other hand, support from teachers, at school and emotional level, is associated with the student's behavior and level of satisfaction with the school; it is thus essential that teachers manage their classes well in order to create an environment that enables teaching by explaining at an appropriate pace. This means that the performance of teachers is fundamental to promote learning; therefore, they become a key piece in the teaching-learning process and must provide the most optimal conditions so their students learn. From this perspective, they must select and organize contents, activities and spaces that are relevant and stimulate learning according to the students' interests. As Bono (2010) stresses, teachers have an influence on their students' motivation and learning through the way they plan their actions and instruct. The first challenge faced by teachers at the moment of planning is to select the contents that are indispensable and essential for their students. The standardized, conventional education bores students. According to Gimeno (2012), the shortcomings of traditional and contemporary education, which can affect motivation (or lack thereof) to learn, are: first, *fragmentation* – syllabuses can be described as a division of knowledge into manageable blocks to be taught to students so they memorize, retain and relate them, forming a coherent and useful whole. From this perspective, it is necessary to develop a curriculum organized around real-life problems and meaningful topics through which students have to think how to solve these problems by applying relevant contents and skills to different thematic areas and subjects (Beane, 2005). Second, *decontextualization* – when selecting contents the teacher should bear in mind, on the one hand, that they should be relevant for students according to the characteristics and interests of the latter; on the other hand, the contents and, therefore, the learning derived from its acquisition must be functional. In this sense, demotivation sets in due to, among other things, the little practical use that students see in theoretical contents, since in most cases they are concepts far removed from the focus of these individuals' interests. Third, *prioritizing* quantity over quality – the conventional school has progressively generated an encyclopedic curriculum of unlimited extension and lacking in depth (Gimeno, 2012). The scope of programs does not allow students to approach contents correctly but make them limit their effort to studying to pass exams, a material which is mostly forgotten.

The second challenge that teachers face is methodology, understood as a set of material tasks and experiences as well as resources that they employ in order to promote the learning of contents. According to Coll (2010), the methodological aspects that promote an experience of motivating learning can be: *methodological diversity*, when the teacher uses different activities, experiences and even resources or means that provide students different perspectives of reality and multiple possibilities for action. For this reason, students feel it as more interesting and stimulating, having their natural curiosity awakened. Likewise, it lets them connect what they learn with other ordinary themes and situations. Thus, the material should pose a cognitive challenge and cause a desire to know. On the other hand, *collaboration* not only motivates but also contributes to enriching the quality of learning. It is important to

complement individual tasks with cooperative work activities in which diversity is present. The most effective strategy is to combine activities for the whole group, work in small groups and individual activities. Finally, with regard to methodology, one should promote a self-regulation that emphasizes the importance of developing students who are truly able to build their knowledge. To this end, one should come up with tasks that favor and promote the development of metacognitive skills that enable the raising of awareness and critical reflection (Carolina, 2011). In this regard, one also should allow them learning how to think, learn how to learn, solve problems, applying the acquired knowledge to different situations, to make new and innovative proposals.

Finally, teachers should ask themselves: how should I evaluate a student's learning? Appreciation for effort and not just results, confidence in the ability to overcome difficulties, feeling "important" for teachers could be included into what has been defined as a good teacher-student relationship (Connel & Wellborn, 1991, cited in Murray & Greenberg, 2000), and in this good relationship evaluation as a motivating element plays an important role. Traditionally it has been employed with a punitive character, that is, from the results of the evaluation a ranking is established and according to the position obtained in such classification rewards and punishments are distributed to the evaluated individuals (Moreno, 2010); in this way, we see that if success or failure can be attributed to luck or the level of the group – and this is not under the control of the student –, motivation to learn is clearly impaired. It is therefore necessary that students feel that the evaluation collects information on how they face their learning process, assesses their successes and failures, and certifies their progress according to known, clear, understandable and proper criteria. Following this reasoning we can say that evaluation affects students in many different ways: guiding their opinion as to what is important to learn, affecting their motivation, self-perception of competence and development of learning strategies (Crooks, 1988). Evaluation thus affects a student's motivation to learn and might generate a conflict between the motives or intentions of students at the beginning of a teaching-learning process, and the strategies that favor the evaluation demands applied to such a process (Kember, 1996). Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to determine which dimensions of the teaching-learning process concerning the learning of History of Spain are motivating and which are not, from the perspective of students.

Method

To approach the perspective of students a "non-experimental descriptive" investigation methodology was chosen (Salkind, 2009), as the intention is to provide an overview about what is done and taught in History of Spain and the perception of students on what motivates them to learn this subject in "Bachillerato".

Participants

Data was collected from five different databases: 1993-1994, 2000-2001, 2001-2002, 2002-2003, and 2010-2013. The first four bases (to be approached jointly) counted with the participation of 1,523 students from the Autonomous Community of Murcia aged between 17 and 23 years old, while the fifth (used to deepen previous results) included 200 students aged between 18 and 22 years old spread across the provinces of Alicante (25), Almería (25), Barcelona (25), Murcia (100) and Seville (25).

In the first four bases (1993-2003) the participants come from the Autonomous Community of Murcia. In this first investigation, the selection of participants was done according to a stratified sampling. Thus, the territory was divided into zones (in accordance with the criterion of the Educational territorial administration of the Region of Murcia), and it was intended that each zone was represented proportionally to its student population, number of Institutes and physical spaces that compose it. By doing so it was possible to collect information from all Secondary schools or Institutes, with 22 Institutes having 20 cases or more. In addition, in all zones there was at least one Institute with more than 15 cases. In this way, aiming at greater representation, this selection of participants considered all situations possible concerning students: be attending "Bachillerato" or COU [University Orientation Course, *Curso de Orientación Universitaria*] at the moment of description (15% of cases); be attending

Vocational Training (7%), pursuing a *Diplomatura* (Three-year degrees) (14%), a Licentiate degree (57%), not having continued studying after completing “Bachillerato” (4%), and having finished school and being working (3%). Information was collected from the two applicable Educational Systems: LGE [General Law of Education, *Ley General de Educación*], with 51% of cases, and LOGSE [Act on General Organization of the Educational System, *Ley Orgánica de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo*] with 49% of cases; all university degrees in the Autonomous Community of Murcia had students who described their recollection of History classes.

Regarding the fifth database (2010-2013), the Autonomous Communities and provinces were selected according to the following criteria: experience of the Communities with competence in education, historical identities and situation concerning the average number of students who passed “Bachillerato” at national level (77.75% of the national average) by communities and provinces. In this sample, freshmen college students were interviewed so that all fields of knowledge and different degrees were represented. These cases were chosen by means of “cluster” and “quota” samplings (Stake, 2006, p. 102), with the selection of units of individuals (clusters) rather than the individuals themselves (in this case, universities and different fields of knowledge) and the establishment of the number of participants (quotas) for each field of knowledge and university (which is performed by randomly interviewing the first participants who meet the conditions required).

Instrument

Data was collected through open-ended questionnaires (in the case of 1993-2003 databases) and open-ended interviews in the case of the second investigation (2010-2013 databases). In both instruments, open-ended questions were asked so as to allow students to express freely their ideas, beliefs, opinions, evaluations. The open-ended questionnaire brought only one question, which referred to a “description that narrated the *usual* History of Spain class”. These narratives allowed the development of the interview questions, which broadly correspond to the following questions: Do you like History classes? Why? What is the best thing about History classes, that which has been useful to you? What is the worst thing about History classes, that which has not been useful to you?

Procedures

The procedure for collecting information from the first four bases through the open-ended questionnaire went through the following phases: a) the center was contacted, informed about and invited to participate in the research; b) days and dates for the application of the questionnaires were scheduled; c) the students were informed about the objective of the questionnaire and data confidentiality; d) the students who accepted it answered the questionnaire. The procedure adopted to obtain information from the fifth base (once fields of knowledge, degrees and the requirement of students being freshmen were defined), consisted of checking at which time and in which classrooms the classes were being taught in order to find students more easily. After the interviewer introduced himself/herself and explained the purpose of the interview, the latter would be recorded in common areas of each School. More specifically, the sequence followed (making sure that the participants were freshmen and that the degrees were the required ones) was: a) they were informed about and invited to participate in an interview intended to collect data for the research being carried out; b) they were given a brief introduction on the theme that founded the interview (the History of Spain subject in the second year of “Bachillerato”); c) the students who accepted answered the questions they were asked. The interviews were fully recorded with the students’ consent.

From the obtained information, the analysis process consisted of “making sense” of the textual information. To do so, data was *sorted* into categories so that information could be arranged and given a meaningful representation, allowing us to *extract* and *draw* a series of *comprehensive* conclusions of the “studied reality” (Ruiz, 2012). Thus, the qualitative analysis process was conducted in two major phases, the first being the reduction of information through four primary tasks: a) determination of units of analysis; b) establishment of a system of categories and codes; c) assignment of meaningful elements to established categories and codes; and d) grouping of such categories and codes, with the

elements included, into other categories and codes of superior and globalizing hierarchical order. Related to the theme addressed in this article – motivation –, five main categories were obtained, namely: *teachers*, *History*, *contents*, *methodology* and *evaluation*. The teachers, contents, methodology and evaluation categories refer to motivation factors linked to external aspects. By contrast, the History category comprehends the interviewees' opinions related to internal motivation factors.

Results

Our objective, with an eminently descriptive-interpretive approach, is to understand better and reflect on how the History subject is taught, considering the students' motivation to learn,

Broadly speaking, the role of teachers is a motivating or demotivating element. From the opinions given by the interviewees we can state that *teachers*, *History*, *methodology*, *contents*, *evaluation*, in that order, are the dimensions which, from the students' perspective, make History classes a more or less interesting or motivating experience. The role of teachers stands out significantly among the other dimensions. Below is a detailed analysis of the data obtained using the categories of analysis as axes, supported by the most representative opinions of the students, which appear coded by an order of identification number followed, in some cases, by the report number.

Teachers as motivating agents for the learning of History

The interviewees expressed the importance of teachers as managers and creators of learning environments characterized by:

The teachers' way of being: it promotes a relaxed atmosphere regardless of the methodology used: "614.06. *Nos motivaba por su manera de ser, no por la metodología que utilizó*" [She got us motivated for her way of being, not for the methodology used] (1999); "458.16. *Las clases se hacían amenas por el carácter de la profesora, era muy simpático*" [Our classes were pleasant because of the teacher's personality; she was really nice] (2000); "584. *Lo mejor sus chistes y sus bromas, sus gracias*" [The best thing was her jokes and pranks; she was fun].

They manifested the need for an approachable teacher: "579. *Lo mejor, pues el cachondeo con el profesor que teníamos mucha confianza*" [The best thing was that we always had fun with that teacher, there was trust between us]; "551. *Lo mejor era el ambiente, la cordialidad entre profesor y alumno*" [The best thing was the atmosphere, the warmth between teacher and student]; "512. *Lo que más, la forma de relacionarse el profesor, no sé, que lo notas más cercano, que no es ya el profesor y los alumnos*" [It is about how the teacher treats us, how close we feel to him, without feeling that barrier between teachers and students]; "574. *Podías hablar con ella como si fuese una amiga*" [You could talk to her like you talk to a friend].

The attitude of teachers towards the subject: they should show a sincere interest in the teaching and learning of the subject; they should know what they are doing, why they are doing it and believe it; a teacher's passion for teaching boosts a student's motivation and enthusiasm: "302.08. *Le encantaba dar clase, nos explicaba con un entusiasmo tremendo, y de una forma tan dulce que a todo el mundo le gustaba escuchar sus explicaciones*" [She was passionate about teaching; she lectured with such enthusiasm and in a such sweet way that everybody loved to hear her explanations] (2001); "220. *Lo mejor es que siempre nos intentó educar para ser mejores personas*" [The best thing is that she always intended to educate us and makes us better people].

Support and confidence in the students: it refers to the ability to undertake tasks as motivating elements; in this sense, students appreciate those teachers who care about them and encourage them: "467.11. *Está continuamente animando a sus alumnos, sobre todo en época de exámenes*" [She is always cheering up the students, especially during exam seasons]; "1418.70 *Reconocía el esfuerzo realizado en los estudiantes*" [He acknowledged the effort students made] (2002); "206. *Creo que me ha servido para descubrir que para ser profesor tienes que preocuparte más por tus alumnos*" [I believe that it made me see that for you to be a teacher you have to care about your students more].

When all those elements are not present in the teacher students complain: “122.12 *Su actitud en clase era pasiva, estaba siempre con cansancio y nos lo transmitía*” [She had a passive attitude in the classroom, was always tired and passed that onto us] (1998); “307. *Lo negativo quizás que me decepcione ese año con Historia, con esa asignatura, porque como dije antes la comparación con el año anterior era de una diferencia importante, de calidad docente sobre todo*” [Maybe what has frustrated me this year about History, about this subject, as I said when I was comparing it with last year, is that there is a big difference, especially when it comes to the quality of teaching].

The subject itself as a motivating factor for the learning of History

In this respect it is worth bringing, on the one hand, the opinions of students who claim that the learning of History has a value in itself as it allows them to shape their own ideas, take a critical stance before real life situations from the past, make decisions and form an ideology. Ultimately they understand that studying this subject is relevant on a personal level: 110.1. “*Sí, porque siempre me ha gustado la historia*” [Yes, because I have always liked history]; “1062.36. *Consigue que los contenidos que aprendemos nos resulten enriquecedores intelectualmente*” [It is good when the contents we learn make us intellectually richer] (1992); “796.26. *Eran muy útiles y servía de mucho a los alumnos, por lo menos a mí me beneficiaron mucho respecto a mi vida cultural*” [They were really useful to us students; well, at least they greatly benefited my own cultural life] (2000); “204. *Lo mejor que quieras que no aprendes la historia de España que es cultura general y que quieras que no siempre te viene bien*” [The best thing is that, you wanting it or not, you learn the history of Spain, which is general culture, and, you wanting or not, it is always useful]; “463.07. *Hace ver las cosas que suceden desde un punto de vista objetivo, no subjetivo*” [It makes you see things that happen from an objective rather than subjective point of view] (1997).

Furthermore, the students manifest that learning history can be a source of cultural enrichment; this subject is understood as a living and structured science that allows comprehending reality “796.26. *Eran muy útiles y sería de mucho a los alumnos, por lo menos a mí me beneficiaron mucho respecto a mi vida cultural*” [They were really useful to us students; well, at least they greatly benefited my own cultural life] (1998); “502.14 *Sus clases fueron totalmente educativas, interesantes y muy prácticas. Nos 'despejó' de esa típica Historia 'empollada' que no sirve para nada*” [His/her classes were totally instructional, interesting and very practical. She would not teach that boring useless history] (2000); “108. *Me ha servido para conocer algo de lo que ha pasado, de la historia*” [It was good for me to learn something about the past, about history]; “124. *La parte del siglo XX porque es más actual y te informa más*” [The part about the 20th century, because it is more current and informative].

However, not all voices were positive about it; we found students who would claim that studying History ends up little motivating when they cannot understand what the purpose is: “112. *Estudiar Historia no sirve para nada*” [Studying History is useless].

Following the same line, those who elaborate more on it do so emphasizing that only some of the contents are useless and discourage them; others mention the teaching-learning methodology, stating that memorizing is useless, admitting that they have forgotten everything they had memorized so far. In addition, they point out as a little motivating element the scope of the program “524. *Tienes que estudiar mucho, son muchas cosas para luego... ¿Es mucho contenido? Sí, y que no nos da tiempo a darlo todo*” [You have to study a lot; it is just too many things ... Is the content too heavy? Yes, it is, and we do not have time to cover it all].

Teaching methodology as a motivating factor for the learning of History

Mentions of classroom tasks, means and resources used by teachers are distributed equally between those who report motivating experiences and those who report demotivating factors. The type of tasks can be organized into two blocks: in relation to the way the content is addressed or in relation to the cognitive level required from students.

If we take as reference the way that the content is approached, and in accordance with what has been established in our theoretical framework, the types of tasks mentioned are basically two: lectures and explanations, which can adopt different forms – the teacher as the only transmitter of information, the combination of lectures with quizzes, or the complementation of lectures with the use of audiovisual media and ICTs. The tasks mentioned by most of the students are the lectures, which are more or less dynamic, or complemented to a greater or lesser extent with the use of audiovisual media and ICTs. The other practical exercises are mentioned on occasion but, in any case, understood as a complement to the previous methodology.

When it comes to the cognitive level required, the students speak of memorization and, on rare occasions, comprehension. In this case, it might be important to stress that comprehension is always mentioned from the perspective of history as a means for one to understand reality: “1358.06. *Haciéndonos ver que lo se explicaba en su momento fue actualidad, mostrando a los más escépticos la importancia real de saber Historia*” [Making us see that the explanation referred to something that was once current, showing the most skeptical ones the real importance of learning History] (2002). Conversely, when memorization is addressed, it appears combined with the functionality of the contents: “514. *A mí es que la Historia, yo que sé, lo veía mucho memorieta y me gusta más lo que es la comprensión, comprender las cosas y, a partir de ahí,...memorizar tanto no me gusta mucho*” [History to me, I don't know, I saw it more like as memorization and I prefer understanding, understanding things and, from there, ... I do not like to memorize so much]; Yet, there are those who claim that they like to study history because they are good at memorizing: “119. *Bueno... es que a mí se me da bien la historia porque se me da bien aprender de memoria...*” [Well... I am good at history because I am good at memorizing...].

If we go deeper into the analysis, studying what causes motivation or demotivation to learn History, we observe that it depends on how teachers develop their lectures. The materials employed (the exclusive use of textbooks is little motivating; other resources such as films, documentaries, etc., may be more or less motivating) in addition to the use of methodologies based on questions and debates that favor the active participation of students are more appreciated than those in which students are only expected to hear the explanations or summarize the materials presented. We show these results below.

Lectures or explanations may be more or less motivating depending on how the teacher in charge develops them: “879.09. *Su forma de explicar es clara y amena, te hace sentir la Historia como si la estuvieses viviendo en ese momento*” [Her way of explaining is clear and pleasing, it makes you feel History as if you were living at that time] (1999); “431.05. *Las clases se solían hacer amenas, ya que lo explicaba muy bien y se notaba que vivía la Historia*” [The classes used to be pleasing because she explained everything very well and you could tell she lived the History] (2000); 594. “*Hacía que nos interesáramos por el tema*” [She got us interested in the theme]. On the other hand, “slow”, “boring”, “repetitive”, “not a bit dynamic” lectures demotivate students to learn history: “1424.30 *Su metodología de dar clase era muy aburrida y rutinaria, le faltaba expresividad en sus explicaciones*” [His teaching methodology was very dull and boring; his/her explanations lacked expressiveness] (2002); “1379.34. *Era muy monótono, aburrido y poco didáctico*” [It was very boring, dull and little didactic] (2003).

Reading textbooks or notes is a practice considered by all students who refer to it as not motivating at all. Using textbooks is often associated with lack of motivation, especially if they are the only teaching resource: “544.06. *Durante el tiempo que me dio clase se limitaba a leer lo que ponía en el libro, con lo que la gente no le hacía caso y sus clases eran un caos*” [During the time he was our teacher he only read what was in the book; so we ignored him, and his classes were pure chaos] (2000). Conversely, many students that mentioned History classes as a motivating experience argued that the teacher “did not get attached to textbooks” or “did not use textbooks”: “219. *La mayoría de las cosas las explicaba con cosas que le había sucedido a él (..) no seguía el libro para nada, y las clases se hacían entretenidas, se quedaba todo muy bien.*” [He explained most things with things that had happened to him (..) he did not follow the book at all, and his classes were fun, everything about it was good.]

Watching films and documentaries is interpreted both as a motivating and demotivating practice. In general, using audiovisual resources or technological means is a practice highly appreciated by students, especially if combined with explanations, debates, questions, etc. The students say that this

helps make the teaching-learning process more dynamic and that they can better understand the contents: "100. ... *Nos ponía un montón de documentales, nos ponía muchísimos para enseñarnos cómo había sido todo en aquella época*" [He would show us a lot of documentaries to teach us how things used to be back then].

Quizzes were seen as positive by the students because, according to them: "768.07. *Hacía que el alumno en sus clases tuviera una actitud activa, con continuas preguntas que hacía por sectores de situación dentro de la clase*" [He made the students have an active attitude during classes with the constant questions he made by themes in the classroom] (1999); "543. *Hacen pensar y ayudan a mejor entender la historia, resultado su estudio una experiencia motivadora*" [They make us think and help us understand history better, so studying it is a motivating experience].

Debates are the methodology the students appreciate the most, particularly when it comes to controversial issues and current themes, which are always linked to motivating experiences in History classes: "526. *Profesor estupendo, ... No se ceñía solo a leer el libro y a contar la historia si no que, no sé, lo que más me gustaba era cuando hacía debates*" [What an amazing teacher... He did not limit himself to reading the book and talk about history; what I liked most was when he organized debates].

Summaries often accompany textbook readings, being part of little satisfying routines, although the option of writing summaries proves slightly more interesting than that of listening or reading exclusively: "546... *me entretenía en subrayar y porque luego hacíamos como unos resúmenes de los temas y entonces eso me entretenía. Y eso lo decía*". [I enjoyed highlighting things because afterwards we would write something like a summary of the themes, and that entertained me. And I used to say that.]

Evaluation as a motivating factor in the learning of History

Evaluation is generally perceived as a source of demotivation due to moments, times, results, type of evaluation tests, levels of difficulty, etc. For the analysis of the students' answers about evaluation as a motivating factor, the dimensions they speak of are: memorization as an object of evaluation, tests as an evaluation tool, existence of a positive ongoing evaluation threatened by pop quizzes, and low nonnegotiable grades as a demotivating result of evaluation.

The students' considerations about evaluation show that it is more about evaluating results than processes and focused on checking their ability to express the contents as similar as possible to what has been explained or what is in the textbook, that is, memorization: "528. *Y lo peor, pues eso que se limitaba a corregir con el libro, no con lo que él sabe, si no con los apuntes*" [And the worse thing was that he only corrected us based on the book, not with what he knew, but with the notes]. As for the evaluation moment, at no time the presence of initial, ongoing or final evaluation is questioned; on the contrary, it is made clear that it is a positive element as it forces students to study, review, and learn more. However, what negatively affects evaluation is pop quizzes: "503. *Lo peor, los exámenes sorpresa... Y lo mejor, el día que decía "no hay examen sorpresa"*" [Pop quizzes are the worst... The best, was when she said "no pop quiz today"].

Tests are the only evaluation tool that appears when the students refer to evaluation as a source of motivation or demotivation. The main reasons why tests are a source of demotivation are: heavy content load: "103. *Lo peor, quizás mucho contenido para los exámenes*" [The worst thing maybe is the large amount of contents for the tests]; incoherence between the teaching process and the contents of the evaluation: "404. *Y lo negativo eran los exámenes, la clase era fácil pero los exámenes era difíciles*" [The negative thing was the tests; the class was easy but the tests were hard]; low level of difficulty: "1460.10. *Los exámenes eran muy fáciles*" [The tests were too easy] (2002); "224. *Lo peor yo creo que es que ponía los exámenes un poco demasiado fáciles*" [I think that the worst thing was that the tests were kind of easy], or high level of difficulty, although this sometimes leads to a better formation: "1458.46. *El sistema de evaluar era muy duro, aunque al acabar el curso teníamos una buena preparación*" [The evaluation system was really hard, but at the end of the course we had a good preparation]; besides low grades or nonnegotiable grades: "529. *Y lo que menos eran lo subjetivos que eran los exámenes y que puntuaba bastante por lo bajo*" [The worst thing was how subjective tests were, and all the low grades we got].

Finally, evaluations allowed students achieve academic goals: “985.23. *La principal motivación es aprobar los exámenes*” [The main goal is to pass the tests] (2000); “810.12. *Nos motivaba porque nos decía que sus alumnos son los que tienen la nota media de Historia más alta de selectividad*” [He got us motivated because he would say that his/her students had the highest scores in the selection process for college] (2001) “104. *Lo que me ha servido, pues me ha servido lo que me he estudiado para aprobar*” [It was useful to me; I used what I studied to pass].

Final considerations

It is difficult to disconnect the concept of motivation from methodological matters; however, from the perspective of students, we found a dimension close to purely relational aspects that can greatly contribute to the students’ motivation to learn History: the atmosphere of the classroom and, more specifically, the teacher, who is conceived in the students’ views as the main agent of both motivation and demotivation. Thus, the statements by the participating students (regardless of year, applicable educational law or context to which they belong) suggest that the enthusiasm of teachers, the interest they show in the subject, in addition to them trying to make students understand it and showing that they are available and concerned about the situation of their students, are the aspects that affect the motivation of the latter to learn. It is suggested that the teacher’s attitude towards the subject promotes the student’s interest in learning it.

In this sense, we agree with Nuñez del Río and Fontana (2009) on that students consider as positive aspects in teachers the transmission of “passion” and “joy” for the subject they teach and the activity they carry out; the ability to create a relaxed atmosphere based on trust and interest in students are presented as key elements for motivation. This is the type of teacher who goes beyond the teaching process and places a special focus on affective relationships; a teacher who, ultimately, cares about his/her students and their conditions, characteristics, etc.

In this regard, Strahan (2008) claims that knowing students well is one motivating element; the author points out the need to know in detail the emotional and physical conditions, the cognitive, intellectual and family needs of students, as well as to address these needs, approaching students as individuals. This data corroborates the study by Gutierrez and López (2012), in which support from teachers, particularly the teacher’s appreciation for the student’s achievement is a motivation variable. As noted by Friesen (2010), among others, cultivating relationships of trust (social) is a key element to promote the engagement of students in learning.

The functionality and amount of contents, the type of tasks, the way that teachers organize sessions for students to grasp such contents, as well as the evaluation method, are dimensions that teachers should take into account to promote the student’s interest when studying History, without forgetting that the type of content currently taught and evaluation routines in particular demotivate instead of motivating. In this sense, Tapia (2005) emphasizes the positive effect that teachers showing the usefulness of learning the content, organization and the possibility to review notes in private have on one’s motivation to learn.

The results found in this line of research are consistent with conclusions of authors like Patrick, Hisley & Kempler (2000) who highlight the importance of turning the classroom into an exciting place with amazing activities, which awakes the students’ curiosity, showing their relationship with the intrinsic motivation to learn and psychological vitality. The students propose a learning method based on comprehension rather than memorization, which only motivates those with better performance. The variety of methodologies and resources and the use of ICTs to allow a dynamic participation of students were identified as motivating elements. In this sense, we agree with Brown, Reumann-Moore & Hugh (2009) on that students engage more when learning is perceived as fun, stimulating and challenging. Likewise, Schweinle, Meyer and Turner (2006) argue that promoting a cooperative environment between students and encouraging their participation while in the classroom were identified as motivating factors that favor autonomy and social relations.

On the other hand, memory as an object of evaluation, inconsistencies between the teaching-learning process and the evaluation process, lack of guidance for students to question the evaluation

and understand the grading are the dimensions to which they most refer when evaluation as a motivating factor is put into question. As Groos (1993) points out, it is positive to establish clearly what students are required to do in order to pass the subject; students also need to be informed about these requirements so they understand their relevance.

Finally, appreciation for and interest in History on the part of students are also important motivating factors, decreasing the number of reports about negative elements. This can lead us to two types of assumptions: either History itself is a motivating subject for students, or the fact that they start studying History without motivation is not a determining factor and can be overcome with the success of the other dimensions of analysis.

In conclusion, and despite the years, the legislative reforms and the generational difference, the students interviewed stated that teachers are the key element to promote motivation. For this reason, teachers must be capable of creating environments that generate learning and, therefore, motivation to learn History. From this perspective, the students call for a teacher able to plan, organize and propose tasks different from the traditional methodology – in which the student plays a passive role –, who creates dynamic environments by means of cooperative activities in which reflection and criticism in an atmosphere of trust contribute to fostering interest, engaging students and make them acquire a taste for History, besides raising academic quality. This idea of quality teaching contrasts with that promoted as of the last educational reforms, in which a continuous need to adapt to new production systems prioritizes a teaching method based on technical aspects, is focused on academic motivation and school grades based on standardized and decontextualized evaluations of students to the detriment of the recognition of the teaching role in the classroom and the influence that different social or contextual factors may have on them (Inglés, Martínez, Valle, García-Fernández, & Ruiz, 2011).

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